

A YOGIC APPROACH TO WELLNESS

A GUIDE TO CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES OF RISHICULTURE
ASHTANGA YOGA AS TAUGHT BY YOGAMAHARISHI DR SWAMI
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MESSAGE

I am glad to know that MDNIY is organising the **National Yoga Week– 2011**, a national level mass awareness programme for health, happiness and harmony through Yoga from 12th to 18th February 2011 in the MDNIY premises. It is encouraging that you are attempting to unite the diverse traditions of Yoga at this event through the conduct of this event with special emphasis on “Role of Yoga in Wellness”. I am also pleased to note that booklets are being brought out by various traditions on their approach to the Yogic concept of wellness.

In a modern world where Yoga has been equated to mere physical postures with a little breath manipulation and so called meditation, our Guru Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri's contribution to the development of Yoga in the past century and his codification of the ancient teachings in a modern scientific manner is unparalleled. Swamiji's teachings, like him, are huge and seemly never ending in their depth. I am presenting some of the core concepts that I feel are a unique feature of this tradition that is now known as the Gitananda or Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition.

1. **YOGA IS A WAY OF LIFE:** Yoga is not something you do but a way of life to be lived 60/60/24/7/365/x. This requires a lot of introspection, consciousness, awareness, dedication and determination. Easy to say, tough to do but Swamiji showed us how and it is unto us to follow him.
2. **CREATE GURUS NOT FOLLOWERS** Swamiji never wanted to have a huge number of students or a huge million strong organisation. He was more interested in bringing out the potential inherent in each one of his students even if they later hated him for it! Each and every one of Swamiji's students is the best they could have been in this lifetime. Each is an individual and Swamiji brought out the best in each one. No stereotyping or mass mould production at all. Swamiji made students so aware of their Divine nature that many times they forgot him!!
3. **BREATH IS LIFE:** No other system comes close to Swamiji in terms of the vast repertoire and depth of his Pranayama teachings. Starting with the Vibhagha Pranayama and then step by step building up to more than 120 intricate Pranayamas is done in a manner that Prana, that vital cosmic catalyst fills every cell with life and light.
4. **NO OPTION YOGA:** Swamiji termed Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga as the No Option Yoga and placed great importance on a deep understanding of the Yamas and Niyamas which are the firm foundation upon which the real Yoga life can be built. “You wouldn't build a colossal building without a foundation but you want to do it with Yoga?” he would ask numerous easy going aspirants who wanted some ‘quick fix’ Yoga.

5. **STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH:** Every aspect of Swamiji teachings follows a step by step structured approach that is easy to follow and methodical. Emphasis is placed on learning and re-learning the proceeding steps and then proceeding further. “No shortcuts please!” was his refrain for it is always better to be slow and steady than fast and sorry. The emphasis is on growing into the practice rather than forcing oneself into it and that is why the use of props and other contraptions that make Yoga so costly today have never been part of this tradition.
6. **LOVE FOR INDIAN CULTURE:** The major problem facing Yoga in the West is the fact that Yoga has been cleaved away from Indian Culture (Sanathana Dharma). Without an understanding of the Indian (Hindu) culture and the way of life where Yoga originated, it is very difficult to find answers to many questions that confront the sincere seeker. Swamiji tried to inculcate in all students a deep love and understanding of the culture from which Yoga has sprung.
7. **BOUNTIFUL PRACTICES:** Scores and scores of practices and techniques are part of this tradition that has numerous Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga and Jnana Yoga practices for the sincere aspirant. Polarity practices and the Mantra Laya deserve special mention as also the Laya Yoga Kriyas. The intricate and in-depth understanding of Chakras, Nadis and Bindus etc from the Dakshina Marga Tantra tradition of Yogamaharishi Swami Kakananda Brighu is not found elsewhere.
8. **YANTRA, IN TUNE WITH NATURE:** In this Paramparai there are three important sciences, namely Mantra, Yantra and Tantra. Yantra is the mystical science of number, name and form and is a method by which one can live to learn “in tune” with the cycles of the universe rather than be “off tune” with those very cycles. According to the Yantric concept as taught by Swamiji each number has a special quality to it and is not merely a measure of quantity as is usually presumed. Every aspect of life goes through a phase of Nines. This phase may be nine years, nine months, nine weeks or even nine days. This concept can be further extended both ways to go down to nine milliseconds on one hand and up to nine lifetimes on the other.
9. **MUDRAS, DIVINE COMMUNICATION:** One of the main features of the Gitananda tradition is the detailed exposition and understanding of Mudra, the ancient Yogic art and science of gesturing and sealing vital Pranic energies. These advanced techniques designed to improve neuromuscular coordination, culture human emotions and still the restless mind are a means of non-verbal communication that is subtle and refined. They enable us to communicate intrapersonally with our inner self, interpersonally with others and transpersonally with the Divine. The Oli Mudra teachings as well as the usage of Hastha Mudras with the breath in Vibhagha and Pranava Pranayamas are unique to this tradition.

Swamiji was in tune with the Akashic record and there is no other way one can explain the phenomenal and limitless knowledge and wisdom that burst forth through his eloquent roar of truth. May we always be worthy of these great teachings and may his blessings always be with us as we traverse the evolutionary path he envisioned for us.

On behalf of the **Gitananda Yoga World Wide Family**, I extend my best wishes to **Dr IV Basavaraddi**, the dynamic Director of MDNIY and all others concerned for grand success of Yoga Week 2011.

Yours in Yoga,

Yogamani Kalaimamani Yogacharini
MEENAKSHI DEVI BHAVANANI
Director ICYER at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry

HEALTH AND WELL BEING: A YOGIC PERSPECTIVE

Yoga is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic development of our physical, mental and moral-spiritual aspects of being. The philosophy of Yoga is practical and applicable in our day-to-day living. Yoga has been documented to normalise physiological function and recent advances in the field of research have shown that it has sound scientific basis.

Yoga is first and foremost a *moksha shastra* meant to facilitate the individual to attain the final freedom, liberation or emancipation. One of the important by-products of the Yogic way of living is attainment of health and well being. This is brought about by right-use-ness of the body, emotions and mind with awareness and consciousness. This must be understood to be as healthy a dynamic state that may be attained in spite of the individual's *sabija karma* that manifests as their genetic predispositions and the environment into which they are born. Yoga also helps maintain and sustain this dynamic positive state of health after it has been attained though disciplined self effort.

Yoga understands health and well being as a dynamic continuum of human nature and not a mere 'state' to be attained and maintained. The lowest point on the continuum with the lowest speed of vibration is that of death whereas the highest point with the highest vibration is that of immortality. In between these two extremes lie the states of normal health and disease. For many, their state of health is defined as that 'state' in which they are able to function without hindrance whereas in reality, health is part of our evolutionary process towards Divinity. The lowest point on the dynamic health continuum with lowest speed of vibration may be equated with lowest forms of life and mineral matter while the highest point with highest speed of vibration may be equated with Divinity.

Yogi Swatmarama in the Hathayoga Pradipika, one of the classical Yoga texts gives us the assurance, "One who tirelessly practises Yoga attains success irrespective of whether they are young, old decrepit, diseased or weak". He gives us the guarantee that Yoga improves health of all alike and wards off disease, provided we properly abide by the rules and regulations (*yuvaa vrddho ativrddho vaa vyaadhito durbalo pi vaa abhyaasaat siddhimaapnoti sarvayogeshvatandritah-Hathayoga Pradipika I:64*)

YOGIC VIEW OF W.H.O DEFINITION OF HEALTH:

World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity. WHO has also in recent times suggested a fourth dimension of spiritual health but has fallen short of defining it without confusing it with religion. From a Yogic perspective it is heartening that the WHO definition gives importance to 'well being' that is a vital aspect of 'being' healthy as well as 'feeling' healthy. There is no use in a doctor telling patients that all their investigations are 'normal' when the patients themselves are not feeling 'well'.

This qualitative aspect of health is something that Yoga and Indian systems of medicine have considered important for thousands of years. The definition of *asana* given in the *Yoga Sutra* as *sthira sukham* implies this state of steady well being at all levels of existence (*sthira sukham asanam- Yoga Darshan II:46*). Patanjali also tells us that

through the practice of *asana* we can attain a state that is beyond dualities leading to a calm and serene state of well being (*tato dvandva anabhighata- Yoga Darshan II: 48*).

Yoga aims at enabling the individual to attain and maintain a dynamic *sukha sthanam* that may be defined as a dynamic sense of physical, mental and spiritual well being. The Bhagavad Gita defines Yoga as *samatvam* meaning thereby that Yoga is equanimity at all levels. (*yogasthah kurukarmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya siddiyasidhyoh samobutva samatvam yoga uchyate – Bhagavad Gita II: 48*) This may be also understood as a perfect state of health wherein physical homeostasis and mental equanimity occur in a balanced and healthy harmony.

One of the main lacunae of the WHO definition lies in the use of the term ‘state’ that implies health is something to be achieved ‘once and for all’ with no need for care about it thereafter! It is definitely not so. We need to keep working on our health with great vigour and dynamic enthusiasm for the entire span of our life. If health is to be understood as a ‘state’, then it must be understood as a dynamic state that varies from day-to-day and often from minute-to-minute! It is often actually more challenging to maintain this dynamic state of health than to even attain it in the first place. Ask any World No.1 sports champion and they will testify to this inherent truth that applies to sports as well as to life itself.

YOGIC CONCEPTS OF WELLBEING:

Structural aspects of the human being: Yoga considers that we are not just the physical body but are of a multifold universal nature. Concepts of *pancha kosha* (fivefold aspects of our existence) and *trisharira* (threefold aspect of our bodily nature) help us understand our multi-dimensional real nature where health and result from a dynamic interaction at all levels of existence. At the level of the gross body, Yoga and Ayurveda consider that the human body is made up of seven substances. These *sapta dhatus* are *rasa* (chyle), *rakta* (blood), *maamsa* (flesh), *medas* (adipose), *asthi* (bone), *majjaa* (marrow) and *sukra* (semen). Both these ancient health sciences understand importance of *tridosha* (three humors) whose balance is vital for good health. Health is further also understood as harmony of *prana vayus* (major energies of physiological function), *upa prana vayus* (minor energies of physiological function) and stability of *nadis* (subtle energy channels) with proper function of all *chakras* (major energy centres that may be correlated to the psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine axis).

Tridoshas and health: The *tridosha* theory of health and disease that developed during the late Vedic period (*circa 1500-800 BC*) is common to virtually all Indian systems of medicine. *Tridosha* concept has correlation with *pancha mahabhutas* (elements of the manifest universe) as well as *triguna* (inherent qualities of nature). Health is understood to be the balanced harmony of the three humours in accordance with individual predisposition while disease results from an imbalanced disharmony.

Qualities of physical health according to Yoga: The Yogic view of health is exemplified in *Shvetaasvatara Upanishad* where it is said that the first signs of entering Yoga are lightness of body, health, thirstlessness of mind, clearness of complexion, a beautiful voice, an agreeable odour and scantiness of excretions (*laghutvam arogyam alolupatvam varnaprasadam svara sausthavam ca ganghas subho mootra pureesam Yoga pravrittim prathamam vadanti- Shvetaasvatara Upanishad: II-13*).

The *Hathayoga Pradipika* echoes these qualities when Yogi Svātmanāma says, “Slimness of body, lustre on face, clarity of voice, brightness of eyes, freedom from disease, control over seminal ejaculation, stimulation of gastric heat and purification of subtle energy channels are marks of success in Hathayoga”. (*vāpūh kṛsatvān vādānē prasannatāā nāādasputatvān nāyānē sunirmālē ārogatāā bindujayogni dīpanān nāādīvishuddhir hāthā siddhi lakshanān- Hathayoga Pradipika II-78*).

In the *Patanjali Yoga Darshan* we find an excellent description of the attributes of bodily perfection (*kāyā sampat*). It is said in *Vibhūti Pada* that perfection of body includes beauty, gracefulness, strength, and adamant hardness (*rūpā lavānyā bālā vajrā samhanānā kāyā sampat-Yoga Darshan III: 47*). The effulgence that is characteristic of good health is also mentioned when it is said that deep concentration on *sāmānā* (energy of digestion) leads to radiant effulgence (*sāmānā jāyāt jvālānān -Yoga Darshan III:41*).

Qualities of mental health according to Yoga: Yoga not only considers physical health but also more importantly mental health. Qualities of a mentally healthy person (*stitha prajna*) are enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita as follows:

- Beyond passion, fear and anger (*veeta rāgā bhayā krodhān-BG II.56*)
- Devoid of possessiveness and egoism (*nirmāmo nirahamkārah- BG -II.7*)
- Firm in understanding and unbewildered (*sthira buddhir āsammudhān-BG - V.20*)
- Engaged in doing good to all creatures (*sarvā bhūtahiteratān- BG V.25*)
- Friendly and compassionate to all (*maitrāh karuṇā evā ca- BG XII.13*)
- Pure hearted and skilful without expectation (*anāpekshāh sūcīr daksāh- BG XII.16*)

The central theme of Yoga is the golden mean, finding the middle path, a constant search for moderation and a harmonious homeostatic balance. Yoga is the “unitive impulse” of life, which always seeks to unite diverse streams into a single powerful force. Proper practice produces an inner balance of mind that remains stable and serene even in the midst of chaos. This ancient science shows its adherents a clear path to the “eye of the storm” and ensures a stability that endures within, even as the cyclone rages externally.

Maharishi Patanjali tells us that we can gain unexcelled happiness, mental comfort, joy and satisfaction by practicing contentment (*santoshat anuttamāh sukha labhān- Yoga Darshan II: 42*). This link is quite apparent once we think about it, but not too many associate the need for contentment in their greed for anything and everything in this material world.

Qualities of spiritual health according to Yoga: The Bhagavad Gita also delineates qualities of a spiritually healthy person in verses 1, 2 and 3 of chapter XVI. These include: fearlessness (*ābhayān*), purity of inner being (*sattvā samshuddhih*), steadfastness in the path of knowledge (*jñānāyogā vyavasthīh*), charity (*dānān*), self control (*dāmān*), spirit of sacrifice (*yājñān*), self analysis (*svādhyāyān*), disciplined life (*tāpān*), uprightness (*ārjavān*), non violence (*āhīmsān*), truthfulness (*satyān*), freedom from anger (*ākrodhāh*), spirit of renunciation (*tyāgāh*), tranquility (*shāntīn*), aversion to defamation (*āpāishunān*), compassion to all living creatures (*dāyā bhūtesv*), non covetedness (*ālōluptvān*), gentleness (*māardāvān*), modesty (*hrīr ācāpālān*), vigour (*tejāh*), forgiveness (*kshāmān*), fortitude (*dhṛitīh*), cleanliness of body and mind (*saucān*), freedom from malice (*ādṛōhōn*), and absence of pride (*nāā tīmānītān*).

Relationship between food and health: Yoga emphasizes the importance of not only eating the right type of food but also the right amount and with the right attitude. Importance of not eating alone, as well as preparation and serving of food with love are brought out in the Yogic scheme of right living. *Guna* (inherent nature) of food is taken into consideration to attain and maintain good health. Modern dietary science of diet can learn a lot from this ancient concept of classification of food according to inherent nature as it is a totally neglected aspect of modern diet. We are what we eat!

The great Tamil poet-saint Tiruvalluvar offers sane advice on right eating when he says, “He who eats after the previous meal has been digested, needs not any medicine.” (*marunthuena vaendaavaam yaakkaikku arundiyathu atrathu poatri unnin-Tirukkural 942*). He also says that life in the body becomes a pleasure if we eat food to digestive measure (*attraal alavuarinthu unga aghduudambu pettraan nedithu uikkum aaru-Tirukkural 943*). He also invokes the Yogic concept of *Mitahara* by advising that “eating medium quantity of agreeable foods produces health and wellbeing” (*maarupaaduillaatha undi marutthuunnin oorupaadu illai uyirkku -Tirukkural 943*).

YOGIC CONCEPTS OF DISEASE

Maharishi Patanjali has explained the primary causation of stress based disorders through concept of *pancha klesha* (psychological afflictions). These are *avidya* (ignorance of the ultimate reality leading to bodily identification), *asmita* (a false sense of identification), *raga-dweshha* (addiction and aversion), *abhinivesha* (clinging on to life for fear of death), (*avidya asmita raga dwesha abhinivesha kleshah -Yoga Darshan II: 3*). *Avidya* as the root cause enables other *kleshas* to manifest in different forms from time to time. They may be dormant, attenuated, manifest or overpowering in their causation of pain and suffering. (*avidya kshetram uttaresham prasupta tanu vicchinna udaranam- Yoga Darshan II:4*).

As a proponent of preventive medicine, he advises us to prevent that which can be prevented so as to avoid future pain and suffering (*heyam dukkham anagatam -Yoga Darshan II: 16*). This helps us to understand that disease is not something to be feared but is an indicator of where we have been erroneous in our lifestyle, thinking pattern or diet. When this is done with awareness and conscious self analysis is made, it can become an impetus for healthy change putting us back on the right track to a happier and healthier life. Suffering or *duhkha* can be a dynamic springboard in our evolution if we have the right attitude towards it and don't wallow in self pity. Yoga helps train our whole process of thinking thus creating right attitudes for evolutionary growth, every moment of our life.

Yoga Vashista gives an elaborate description of the mechanism by which psychosomatic disorders occur. Mental confusion leads to agitation of *prana* (life force) and haphazard flow along *nadis* resulting in depletion of energy and / or clogging up of these channels of vital energy. This leads to disturbance in the physical body with disturbances of metabolism, excessive appetite and improper functioning of the entire digestive system. Natural movement of food through the digestive tract is arrested giving rise to numerous physical ailments. We need to remember that this text is many thousands of years old whereas the concept of psychosomatic disorders in modern medicine has only been

realized and accepted in recent times. Our ancients had great inner vision and it is up to us to realize their dreams and understand the great message they have left for humanity.

Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri, founder of Ananda Ashram at Pondicherry has written extensively about the relationship between health and disease. He says, “Yoga views the vast proliferation of psychosomatic diseases as a natural outcome of stress and strain created by desire fostered by modern propaganda and abuse of the body condoned on all sides even by religion, science and philosophy. Add to this the synthetic “junk food” diet of modern society and you have the possibility of endless disorders developing...even the extinction of man by his own ignorance and misdeeds”.

He explains the root cause of disease as follows. “Yoga, a wholistic, unified concept of oneness, is *adwaitam* or non-dual in nature. It suggests happiness, harmony and ease. Dis-ease is created when duality or *dwaitam* arises in the human mind. This false concept of duality has produced all conflicts of human mind and the vast list of human disorders. Duality (dis-ease) is the primary cause of man’s downfall. Yoga helps return man to his pristine, whole nature. All diseases, maladies, tensions, are manifestations of divisions of what should be man’s complete nature, the *atman* or ‘Self’. This ‘Self’ is “ease”. A loss of “ease” creates “dis-ease”. Duality is the first insanity, the first disease, the unreasonable thought that “I am different from the whole.... I am unique. I am me.” The ego is a manifestation of disease. Only a distorted ego could feel alone, suffer from “the lonely disease”, in a Universe, a Cosmos totally filled with the ‘Self’. It is interesting that the one of the oldest words for man is “*insan*”. Man is “insane”. A return to sanity, “going sane,” is the subject of real Yoga *sadhana* and Yoga *abhyasa*. Yoga *chikitsa* is one of the methods to help insane man back onto the path of sanity. A healthy man or woman may be known by the term-Yogi”. A very strongly worded yet very true statement indeed from the Lion of Pondicherry!

ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING HEALTH & WELLBEING

The science of Yoga has numerous practical techniques as well as advice for proper life style in order to attain and maintain health and well being. *Bahiranga* practices such as *yama*, *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama* help produce physical health while *antaranga* practices of *dharana* and *dhyana* work on producing mental health along with *pratyahara*. A detailed description of these techniques and their benefits on health is beyond the preview of this lesson and will be discussed in detail in other lessons. It will suffice to say here that Yoga works towards restoration of normalcy in all systems of the human body with special emphasis on the psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine axis.

In addition to its preventive and restorative capabilities, Yoga also aims at promoting positive health that will help us to tide over health challenges that occur during our lifetime. Just as we save money in a bank to tide over financial crises, so also we can build up our positive health balance to help us manage unforeseen health challenges with faster recovery and recuperation. This concept of positive health is one of Yoga’s unique contributions to modern healthcare as Yoga has both a preventive as well as promotive role in the healthcare of our masses. It is also inexpensive and can be used in tandem with other systems of medicine in an integrated manner to benefit patients.

In the *Gheranda Samhita*, a classical treatise on Hathayoga, the human body is likened to an unbaked clay pot that is incapable of holding the contents and dissolves when faced with the challenge of water. It is only through intense heat generated by practice of Yoga that the human body gets baked, making it fit to hold the Divine Spirit. (*aama kumbha ivaambhastho jeeryamanah sada gatah yoganalena samdahya ghata shuddhim samacaret- Gheranda Samhita I:8*)

To live a healthy life it is important to do healthy things and follow a healthy lifestyle. The modern world is facing a pandemic of lifestyle disorders that require changes to be made consciously by individuals themselves. Yoga places great importance on a proper and healthy lifestyle whose main components are:

1. **Achar** –Yoga stresses the importance of healthy activities such as exercise and recommends asana, pranayama and kriyas on a regular basis. Cardio-respiratory health is one of the main by-products of such healthy activities.
2. **Vichar** –Right thoughts and right attitude towards life is vital for well being. A balanced state of mind is obtained by following the moral restraints and ethical observances (*yama-niyama*). As Mahatma Gandhi said, “there is enough in this world for everyone’s need but not enough for any one person’s greed”.
3. **Ahar** – Yoga emphasises need for a healthy, nourishing diet that has an adequate intake of fresh water along with a well balanced intake of fresh food, green salads, sprouts, unrefined cereals and fresh fruits. It is important to be aware of the need for a *satwic* diet, prepared and served with love and affection.
4. **Vihar** – Proper recreational activities to relax body and mind are essential for good health. This includes proper relaxation, maintaining quietude of action-speech-thoughts and group activities wherein one loses the sense of individuality. Karma Yoga is an excellent method for losing the sense of individuality and gaining a sense of universality.

According to Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani, Director ICYER at Ananda Ashram in Pondicherry, Yoga has a step-by-step method for producing and maintaining perfect health at all levels of existence. She explains that social behaviour is first optimized through an understanding and control of the lower animal nature (*pancha yama*) and development and enhancement of the higher humane nature (*pancha niyama*). The body is then strengthened, disciplined, purified, sensitized, lightened, energized and made obedient to the higher will through *asana*. Universal *pranic* energy that flows through body-mind-emotions-spirit continuum is intensified and controlled through *pranayama* using breath control as a method to attain controlled expansion of the vital cosmic energy. The externally oriented senses are explored, refined, sharpened and made acute, until finally the individual can detach themselves from sensory impressions at will through *pratyahara*. The restless mind is then purified, cleansed, focused and strengthened through concentration (*dharana*). If these six steps are thoroughly understood and practiced then the seventh, *dhyana* or meditation (a state of union of the mind with the object of contemplation) is possible. Intense meditation produces *samadhi*, or the enstatic feeling of Union, Oneness with the Universe. This is the perfect state of integration or harmonious health.

PROMOTION OF WELLBEING THROUGH YOGA:

The qualitative aspect of health is something that Yoga and Indian systems of medicine have considered important for thousands of years. The definition of *asana* given in the *Yoga Sutra* as *sthira sukham* implies this state of steady well being at all levels of existence (*sthira sukham asanam- Yoga Darshan II:46*). Patanjali also tells us that through the practice of *asana* we can attain a state that is beyond dualities leading to a calm and serene state of well being (*tato dvandva anabhighata- Yoga Darshan II: 48*).

In order to create an environment conducive to the development of positive health as also to prevent and manage the lifestyle disorders that are threatening humankind, Yoga offers us many practical 'day-to-day' methods of action. Some of these tools for positive health are as follows.

1. **Become aware of your body, emotions and mind:** Without awareness there cannot be health or healing. Awareness of body implies conscious body work that needs to be synchronized with breath to qualify as a psychosomatic technique of health and healing. Psychosomatic disorders that are the bane of the modern world cannot be tackled without awareness.
2. **Improve your dietary habits:** Most disorders are directly or indirectly linked to improper dietary patterns that need to be addressed in order to find a permanent solution to health challenges. One of the most important lifestyle changes that needs be implemented in management of any lifestyle disorder is diet.
3. **Relax your whole body:** Relaxation is most often all that most patients need in order to improve their physical condition. Stress is the major culprit and may be the causative, aggravating, or precipitating factor in so many psychosomatic disorders. Doctors are often found telling their patients to relax, but never tell them how to do it! The relaxation part of every Yoga session is most important for it is during it that benefit of practices done in the session seep into each and every cell producing rest, rejuvenation, reinvigoration and reintegration.
4. **Slow down your breath making it quiet and deep:** Rapid, uncontrolled, irregular breathing is a sign of ill health whereas slow, deep and regular controlled breathing is a sign of health. Breath is the link between body and mind and is the agent of physical, physiological and mental unification. When breath is slowed down, metabolic processes are also slowed and anabolic activities begin the process of healing and rebuilding. If breath is calm, mind is calm and life is long!
5. **Calm down your mind and focus it inwardly:** The mind is as disturbed as a drunken monkey bitten by a scorpion say our scriptures. To bring that wayward agitated mind under control, and take it on a journey into our inner being is fundamental in finding a way out of the 'disease maze' in which we are entangled like a fly in the spider's web. Breath work and sensory control are the base on which mind training can occur; hence much importance is given to *pranayama* and *pratyahara*. It is only after this that concentration practices leading to meditation can have any use. Just sitting and thinking about something is not meditation!

6. **Improve the flow of healing ‘Pranic Life Energy’:** Improve the flow of healing ‘Pranic Life Energy’ to all parts of the body, especially to those diseased parts, thus relaxing, regenerating and reinvigorating yourself. Prana is life and without it there cannot be healing. The different *prana* and *upa prana vayu* that are energies driving different physiological functions of the body need to be understood and applied as per needs of the patient. In patients of digestive disorders, focus must be on the *samana vayu* whereas in pelvic conditions it needs to be on *apana vayu*. The fifth chapter of the *Hathayoga Pradipika* has a detailed analysis of various malfunctions of the *vayu* and their correction.
7. **Fortify yourself against omnipresent stressors:** Decrease your stress level by fortifying yourself against the various omnipresent stressors in your life. When face to face with the innumerable thorns in a forest, one may either choose to spend all their time picking them up one by one while other thorns continue falling or choose to wear a pair of shoes and walk through the forest. The difference is in attitude. Choosing the right attitude can change everything and bring about a resolution of the problem by healing the core. Stress is more about how you react to the stressor than about the stressor itself!
8. **Increase your self reliance and self confidence:** Life is full of challenges that are there only to make us stronger and better. The challenges should be understood as opportunities for change and faced with confidence. We must understand we have the inner power to overcome each and every challenge that is thrown at us by life. The Divine is not a sadist to give us challenges that are beyond our capacity!
9. **Facilitate natural emanation of wastes:** Facilitate natural emanation of waste from the body by practicing *shuddi kriyas* like *dhauti*, *basti* and *neti*. Accumulation and stagnation of waste materials either in inner or outer environment always causes problems. Yogic cleaning practices help wash out impurities (*mala shodhana*) thus helping the process of regeneration and facilitating healing.
10. **Take responsibility for your own health:** Remember that ultimately it is “YOU” who are responsible for your own health and well being and must take the initiative to develop positive health to tide you over challenging times of ill health. Yoga fixes responsibility for our health squarely upon our own shoulders. If we do healthy things we are healthy and if we do unhealthy things we become sick. No use complaining that we are not well when we have been the cause of our problem. As Swamiji Gitananda Giri would say, “You don’t have problems-you are the problem!”
11. **Health and happiness are your birthright:** Health and happiness are your birthright, claim them and develop them to your maximum potential. This message of Swamiji is a firm reminder that the goal of human existence is not health and happiness but is *moksha* (liberation). Most people today are so busy trying to find health and happiness that they forget why they are here in the first place. Yoga helps us regain our birthrights and attain the goal of human life.

The art and science of Yoga has infinite possibilities for providing answers to most health problems troubling modern humankind. However we often misunderstand this science and want it to be a miracle pill. A pill that we take only once, and want all the problems to vanish into thin air! Yoga is a wholistic science and must be learnt and practiced with a holistic view.

YOGIC ATTITUDES TOWARD BEING AND WELLBEING

YOGACHARINI MEENAKSHI DEVI BHAVANANI

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The Rishis have taught us that not only we are what we think, but also, the world is as we think it to be! **Attitude** is all! An essential skill in the art of Yoga is the ability to create the appropriate Bhavana, State of Mind, towards everything, which happens to us. Our thoughts and consequent attitudes (Bhavanas) have incredible power to alter and affect our conscious reality. There is an **awful difference** between the **objective event** and **what we think of the event**, or our **reaction** to that event!

Dr. Victor Frankel, an Austrian Psychoanalyst, discovered his famous psychiatric treatment now known as LOGOTHERAPY while interred in a German Concentration Camp during World War II. It was there, in a place where most lived in despair and suffering, that he underwent a spiritual transformation which illuminated his Inner Life. Deprived all of he owned, separated from his loved ones, imprisoned, he discovered a freedom which no one, not even the worst dictator, could take away. He discovered that **“the only ultimate freedom”** that any human being could possess was **“the freedom to choose their own attitude”**. This discovery, which preserved his physical and emotional health during a time of great stress, later became the corner-stone of his famous psychological therapy. **What happens to us is not as important as what we “think” of what happens to us! In other words, our attitude towards the event is the determining factor of our Karma. It is the internal state itself that is most important, not that which produced it!**

Like most Western so-called “modern discoveries”, this philosophical and psychological fact had been known and utilized for untold millennia by Hindu thinkers. **Adhi Vyadhi**, the Principle of the Power of Mind over the Material Reality, was taught by the Rishi Vashishta to his young disciple, the Yuvaraja, Lord Rama, and has since been extolled by enlightened men through generations to their disciples in India. It is even taught by our Yoga Rishis that one can change one’s Karma by one’s own reaction, one’s attitude or Bhavana to it. **All true spiritual freedom lies in one’s attitude towards the event, the position that the mind takes.** Perhaps the event cannot be changed but one’s attitude can be changed. The attitude, the Bhavana, is surely under the control of the conscious will. And circular that Karma be, sometimes that very attitude has the power to alter the event.

“What shall we do? Where shall we go?” a disciple of the Guru once complained to the Master. “In summer it is so hot. In winter it is too cold”. The Guru smiled and replied, “Go someplace where it is neither hot nor cold”. Where can that place be? Only in the mind, which simply accepts hot as hot, and cold as cold and does not react to it, calling it pleasure or pain, liking it or disliking it.

Human beings, like fish in water, live in different levels of consciousness. Though ten people are outwardly passing through the same experience, they may in actual fact, be having ten completely different experiences according to their conditioning and their attitudes! The external experiences may be the same, but the internal reactions to those experiences can be vastly different.

The human mind also has a very bad habit of clinging to past experiences and allowing them to colour its attitude towards the present. The mind, like a hungry dog with a bone, loves to chew over and over again, the same past experience, suffering anew if the experience was painful, enjoying afresh if the experience contained pleasure. A Zen story illustrates well this human tendency. Two monks were walking down the road when they came to a young girl, standing by the side of a raging river. The girl was frightened of the river, but had to cross it to reach her home on the opposite side. The older monk picked the young girl up, hoisted her on his back, and carried her to the other bank. The two monks then resumed their walk along the path. After half an hour, the younger monk could contain himself no longer. "You know that it is forbidden to us to even go near young and beautiful girls. Yet you picked that one up and took her to the other side". The older monk laughed and said, "I left that girl at the river side. Are you still carrying her?"

Because fasting is an essential part of Yoga practice in our Ashram we often go without food for days. In fact, I have many times gone on twenty-one-day fasts. During those fasts I have experienced the great joy and spiritual exhilaration brought about by such a Tapas. Yet, daily, beggars approach me on the street with mournful, hungry and pitiful looks. "Amma, Amma!" they say, "Very hungry! No food today! I will die! Please give money!" They are miserable if they have to go even one day without eating! Both the beggar and I go without food, but with what a difference in our attitudes!

Hatha Yoga provides an important method for cultivating a personality capable of choosing the right attitude to take in any given situation. How can this be so? Let me explain! The English word "attitude" according to the dictionary, means "the position of the body" or "state of mind regarding some matter". Funk and Wagnall's **Standard College Dictionary** further explains: "Attitude... is a synonym of "position"... which means location or orientation in space.... It also means a **chosen** point of view or opinion." Attitude is thus closely related to "position of the body", for the way we hold our body also indicates our attitude or state of mind. In Sanskrit, the word "**Asana**" springs from the root "**Asi**" or "**to be**". "**Asana**" then reflects also a "**state of being**". "**ASANA**" in modern Yogic contexts has come to indicate merely a gymnastic contortion of the body. But, in essence, "**ASANA**" also means "attitude" or "**Bhavana**" or "state of being". "**Asana**" reflects the "**Bhavana**", and also can produce the "**Bhavana**". Thus, it logically follows that we may use Asanas consciously, to help construct positive attitudes, or Bhavanas. The "**Asana**" helps us to "choose" the "correct point of view or position of both mind and body" towards every situation in our life. In Hatha Yoga, every possible position of which the human body is capable is explored: the body is turned upside down, bent forward, bent backward, balanced on one leg, on the hands, on the tail bone etc. The body poses are numerous and the body is made flexible, capable of assuming any position the mind requires. Since body positions reflect attitude or Bhavana, a flexible body will aid in cultivating a flexible mind, one which is capable of seeing a situation from all possible angles, and then, consciously choosing the best

possible position to take in regards to it! Thus **Bhavana**, **Attitude** and **Asana** are intimately related, each dramatically affecting the other!

If one exists in a structure which cannot be changed, even if the resultant situation is intolerable, then one must either change one's attitude or die or go insane or run away. There is a beautiful prayer to this effect: "*Lord, grant me the strength to change that which can be changed, the patience to accept that which cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference*"! This was the great prayer which Victor Frankel learned during his years in a concentration camp. This, of course, also requires great faith in the Universe and wisdom enough to perceive the situation accurately. One must believe, or know, that every situation into which one is placed is exactly the situation needed for one's growth, for one's further evolution. In Patanjali's system of Yoga, this Bhavana or attitude is the fifth Niyama and is called **Ishwar Pranidhana**, or submission to the will of the Lord, accepting all conditions as a Prasadam from God. **That is the essence of the Yogic attitude towards life. That is also the essence of Christ's "Be-attitude", or the Correct Attitude towards Being.** Every event, every relationship, every situation, pleasant or unpleasant, becomes a means through which one can evolve, through which one can grow spiritually. When one is over the "hump" of seeking for external paradises, of seeking a place to rest which is neither too hot nor too cold, when one realizes that that ideal place exists only in his own mind and in a positive attitude towards the Universe, then one is walking firmly on the Spiritual Path. One understands that heaven (or hell) lies within our own minds.

HOW DOES YOGA HELP DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN WELLBEING?

Yoga is a wholistic science of life, which deals with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Various aspects of Yoga help in the prevention and management of stress thus enabling us to live as healthy a life as possible in a dynamic state of wellbeing.

YOGIC CONCEPTS: Various *yogic* concepts have guided man towards shaping his life and the interpersonal relationships in his social life.

- *Vasudeva kudumbakam* - The whole world is one family. This is an excellent concept which helps one to understand that division on the basis of class, creed, religion and geographical distribution are all 'man made' obstructions towards oneness. One can then look upon all as his own and can bond with everyone irrespective of any barrier.
- *Pancha kosha* - The concept of our five sheaths or bodies helps us to understand how all our actions, emotions and even thoughts can influence our surroundings and that "No man is an island". The concept of "*nara*" or psychic disassociation helps us to be aware of why things happen to us and others in our daily life.
- *Chaturvidha purusharthas* - The four legitimate goals of life tell us how we can set legitimate goals in this life and work towards attaining them in the right way, following our *dharma* to attain *artha* (material prosperity), *kama* (emotional

prosperity) and finally the attainment to the real goal of our life, *moksha* (spiritual prosperity).

- *Chatur ashrama* - This concept of the four different stages in life, helps us to know how, what and when to perform the various activities in our life. *Brahmacharya* is the period from birth till 27 years and is the period for study, conserving the creative impulse and channeling it towards elevating spiritual pursuits. *Grahashta* is the period of responsibility, spanning the period from 27 - 54 years in which we learn to care about others in the family and the social network, fulfilling our *Dharma* towards both the young and the old. *Vanaprasta* or retirement is the period after 54 years when one's life can be played over again and again in the mind with a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction having not to worry about anything at all. *Sanyasa* is the period of life when after performing our duties to the best of our ability for 81 years and after having attained perfection in life we renounce everything for the divine.
- *Pancha klesha*: *Avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (ego), *raaga* (attraction), *dwesha* (repulsion) and *abhinivesha* (urge to live at any cost) are the five *kleshas* or mental afflictions with which we are born into this human life. Through yoga we can understand how these control our life and see their effects on our behaviour. These '*kleshas*' hinder our personal and social life and must be destroyed through *patanjali's kriya yoga*, which consists of *tapas*, *swadhyaya* and *iswara pranidhana* (*atman prasadanam*).
- *Nishkama karma* : Selfless action and the performance of our duty without any motive, are qualities extolled by the *Bhagavad Gita*. Performing one's duty for the sake of the duty itself and not with any other motive helps us to develop detachment (*vairagya*) which is a quality vital for a good life.
- *Karmasu Kouशलam* : 'Skill in action' is Yoga says Yogeshwar Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. 'To do our best and leave the rest' is how Pujya Swamiji Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj used to describe it. Even if we don't practice the other aspects of yoga, we can be 'living' Yoga, by performing all our duties skill fully and to the best of our ability. A great artist, doctor, worker, singer or sportsman can be a Yogi by performing their duty to perfection, without care for the rewards of the action, even if they do not practice any *asanas* or *pranayamas*.
- *Samatvam* : 'Yoga is equanimity' says the *Bhagavad Gita*. Development of a wholistic personality neither affected by praise nor blame through development of *vairagya* (detachment) leads to the state of "*stitha prajna*" or "*sama bhava*". This is a state of mind which is equally predisposed to all that happens, be it good or bad. Such a human is a boon to society and a pleasure to live and work with.
- *Vairagya*: The concept of *vairagya* (detachment) when understood and cultivated makes us dispassionate to the *dwandwas* (the pairs of opposites) such as praise-blame, hot-cold or pleasant-unpleasant.
- Yoga as a "Way of Life": The regular practice of Yoga as a 'Way of Life' helps to reduce the levels of physical, mental and emotional stress. This lays emphasis on Right Thought, Right Action, Right Reaction and Right Attitude.

HATHA YOGA AND JNANA YOGA: Yogic *Asanas*, *Pranayamas* and *Jnana Yoga Kriyas*, work on the various *Koshas* of our body and clear up all the subconscious ‘quirks’ in our brain from the billions of years of evolution from animal to the human state. An understanding of these ‘quirks’ helps us to understand our reaction to various situations and helps to prevent our ‘stress response’ to them. ‘Stress Relievers’ from *Hatha Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* are of immense benefit in relieving the pent up emotions and the reaction to the stressful situation.

YAMA AND NIYAMA: The *Pancha Yama* and *Pancha Niyama* provide a strong moral and ethical foundation for our personal and social life. They guide our attitudes with regard to the right and wrong in our life and in relation to our self, our family unit and the entire social system. These changes in our attitude and behaviour will go a long way in helping to prevent the very causes of stress in our life.

The *pancha yama* consisting of *ahimsa* (non – violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (proper channeling of creative impulse) and *aparigraha* (non – coveted-ness) are the “DO NOT’S” in a *Yoga Sadhaka’s* life. Do not kill, do not be untruthful, do not steal, do not waste your god given creativity and do not covet that which does not belong to you. These guide us to say a big “NO” to our lower self and the lower impulses of violence etc. When we apply these to our life we can definitely have better personal and social relationships as social beings.

The *pancha niyama* consisting of *saucha* (cleanliness), *santhosha* (contentment), *tapas* (leading a disciplined life of austerity), *swadhyaya* (introspectional self analysis), and *ishwar pranidhana* (developing a sense of gratitude to the divine self) guide us with “DO’S” - do be clean, do be contented, do be disciplined, do self - study (introspection) and do be thankful to the divine for all of his blessings. They help us to say a big “YES” to our higher self and the higher impulses. Definitely a person with such qualities is a God-send to humanity. Even when we are unable to live the *yama* and *niyama* completely, even the attempt by us to do so will bear fruit and make each one of us a better person and help us to be of value to those around us and a valuable person to live with in our family and society. These are values which need to be introduced to the youth in order to make them aware and conscious of these wonderful concepts of daily living which are qualities to be imbibed with joy and not learnt with fear or compulsion.

ATTITUDE: “To have the will to change that which can be changed, the strength to accept that which can not be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference” is the attitude which needs to be cultivated. An attitude of letting go of the worries or the problems and a greater understanding of our mental process helps to create a harmony in our body, mind whose disharmony is the main cause of ‘*Aadi – Vyadi*’ or the psychosomatic disorders.

PRANAYAMA: The practice of *Pranayama* helps to regulate our emotions and stabilize the mind, which is said to be as restless as a ‘drunken monkey bitten by a scorpion’.

Animals that breathe slowly are seen to be of less excitable nature than those who breathe rapidly and a similar observation holds true for humans. Even when we get angry, we can experience that our breathing becomes rapid and it is slower when we are cool and relaxed. Thus the slow, rhythmic and controlled breathing in *Pranayamas* leads to the emotional control seen in many *Yoga Sadhakas*.

PRATYAHARA: *Pratyahara Kriyas* help to distance our self from the sensory objects, attraction to whom is said to be the initial step in the causation of stress in man. Here, we withdraw our self from the senses and then are not affected by them. We realize how false the senses are in reality, and then do not get either attracted to them nor feel any revulsion towards them.

DHARANA AND DHYANA; Dharana and *Dhyana*, help to focus our mind on the right ideals and pursue our goals in a spirit of “*Nishkama Karma*” (selfless action) and “*Karmashu Koushalam*” (skillful actions). Development of clarity of thought appears when we are a ‘*Stitha Prajna*’ (person of mental balance) and have ‘*Sama Bhava*’ (equal reaction to the opposites). Proper sleep patterns and a subjective feeling of wellness are produced by *Yoga* and this in turn leads to better human relationships, proper attitudes, increased production at work and the greater good for the individual, family, nation and ultimately for the whole of humanity.

BHAKTI YOGA: *Bhakti Yoga* enables us to realise the greatness of the Divine and understand our puniness as compared to the power of the Divine or nature. We realize that we are but ‘puppets on a string’ following his commands on the stage of the world and then perform our activities with the intention of them being an offering to the divine and gratefully receive HIS/ HER/ ITS blessings.

NADA YOGA AND MANTRA YOGA: Music and the chanting of Mantras with devotion helps to elevate the mind into a higher plane where the individual transcends their problems and can look at things in the right perspective. A detached view of our life can help us to see our self in the true reality. The Divine manifests in various ways and the loss of our individual ego can enable us to see the Divine Self that is there within us and also within all beings.

JATTIS – BASIC WARMING UP PRACTICES

Jattis are basic movements of the body that help to loosen up different body parts and release pent up tensions that have accumulated there due to misuse, disuse and abuse. They improve the circulation to the individual body parts and thus the flow of Pranic energy is enhanced by these simple movements. Stress that tends to accumulate in the joints is released in a controlled manner and debilitating conditions such as arthritis are prevented.

Hastha Jattis (movements of the hands): Take up a comfortable standing position and lift your right hand. Start to shake your hand slowly with awareness of the movements at the wrist joint. Increase the speed of the movement a bit and then after some time start to shake your hand as fast as you can. Continue this fast shaking for a few minutes.

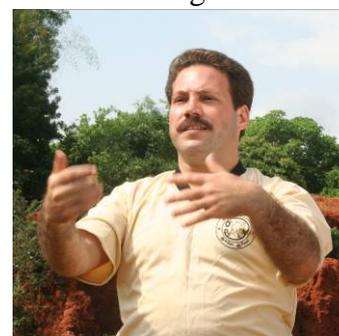
When you have had enough stop shaking your hand and bring it back to your side. Breathe deeply and enjoy the fresh flow of blood rushing into your hand as a result of this vigorous shaking.

Lift your left hand and start to shake it slowly. Be aware of the movements of the wrist joint. Slowly increase the speed of the movement while keeping your hand as lax as possible. After some time start to shake your hand as fast as you can for a few minutes. When you feel that have had enough, stop shaking your hand and bring it back to your side. Enjoy the fresh flow of blood rushing into your hand as a result of this vigorous shaking.

Lift both your hands and start to shake them slowly with a deep awareness of the movements at the wrist joint. Let your elbows be relaxed so that the shaking is transmitted throughout your forearms. Increase the speed of the shaking movement bit-by-bit until you are shaking your hands as fast as possible. Continue this fast shaking for a few minutes. When you feel that you have had enough, stop shaking your hands and bring them back to your sides. Breathe deeply and enjoy the fresh flow of blood coupled with revitalizing Pranic energy rushing into your hands as a result of this vigorous shaking. This washes away all accumulated toxins and negative stressful radicals from the joints and relieves pent up stress from your musculoskeletal system.

After a few minutes of relaxation in the Samasthiti Asana, lift both hands to your chest level and start to circle them at the wrist joints. Keep your awareness focused on the wrist joints. After some time start to circle your hands in the opposite direction. After a few rounds of this movement, relax your hands back to side and breathe deeply. Enjoy the relaxation that seeps into your forearms and wrists.

To wind up this activity, start to shake both hands again and while shaking both hands continue to move your arms all around the body so that the maximum range of arm span is attained in front, to the side, high up, down and to your back.



This helps energize the Pranamaya Kosha that is our energy sheath or subtle body. Use your creativity to make energetic patterns all around yourself while recharging your psychic batteries with the vital Pranic energy. After completing the full range of activity relax in Samasthiti Asana and let the energy flow into all parts of your body for healing and well being.

Pada Jattis (movements of the feet): Take up a comfortable standing position. Shift your weight onto the front of your foot so that the entire weight is held on your toes. Slowly shift your weight to the back of your feet so that it is all felt on your heels. Gently and slowly shift your weight back to your toes and then back to your heels a few times. Relax back in the Samasthiti Asana and breathe deeply.

Begin to shift the weight of your body onto your right foot without lifting the left. Shift your weight to your left foot. Continue to shift your weight from your right to your left and then back to the right a few more times. Relax in the Samasthiti Asana with your weight balanced equally on your right and left feet.

To continue this Jathi, start to move your weight on your feet in a clock-wise direction. Shift it on to your toes and then to your right foot. Shift it to your heels and finally your left foot. Continue this movement with awareness for a few rounds.

Start to shift your weight in the opposite direction by shifting it on to your toes, left foot, heels and then your right foot for a few rounds. Come back to the equal balanced standing pose and relax with deep breathing.

Try to stand on your toes by lifting your heels off the ground so that your entire weight is balanced on the balls of your toes. Come back to the flat foot and then lift your toes so that your weight is balanced totally on your heels. Alternate this forward and backward movement a few times. Relax back in a steady Samasthiti Asana for a short while.

Come onto your toes and walk around the area on your toes in the clockwise direction. Then do the same in the opposite direction. Let your entire awareness and concentration be centered in the experience of being literally “on your toes”. Enjoy the feeling of lightness that engulfs your whole body during this practice. Come back to the flat foot position and relax there for a few seconds.

Go back onto your heels and walk around the area with your weight balanced on your heels. Feel the dramatic change in energy levels between being “up on your toes” and “down on your heels”. Come back to the flat foot position and let your mind and body enjoy the entire experience of increased foot awareness.

From the Samasthiti Asana lift your right leg in front of you and shake your foot a few times. Circle your foot a few times in one direction and then in the opposite direction. Kick your foot a few times to relieve any pent up stress in the ankle joint. Relax the right foot back to the ground.

Repeat the practice on the opposite side by lifting your left leg and shaking it. Circle your foot in both directions a few times. Finally wind up the practice by kicking your foot to clear



off any negative energies still sticking to your feet. Relax your foot back to the ground and perform a few rounds of deep and controlled breathing.

Settle yourself into a steady and comfortable standing position and balance your weight so that it is distributed 60% on the front of your feet and 40% on the back of your feet. Make sure that it is distributed equally between your right and left feet. This is the equal balanced Samasthiti Asana where there is emphasis on a relaxed, yet alert state of the body and mind. Enjoy the rejuvenated circulation of fresh blood flowing into your feet and feel the stress being washed away from your feet completely.

Shirsha Jathi (Head rolling action): The simple head rolling movement is a good practice to prevent and relieve stress from the neck, upper back and shoulder region. Stand in the Samasthiti Asana with your arms by your side. Slowly lower your head until your chin touches your chest. Then roll your head towards your right until it is in contact with your right shoulder. Continue the rolling movement and let your head dangle over your back and then roll it onto your left shoulder. Finally lower it back to your chest with your chin in contact with



your chest. Repeat this rolling action a few more times.

Perform the head rolling action in the opposite direction by bringing your chin to your chest and then roll your head onto your left shoulder. Continue over the back and bring your head to your right shoulder. Roll your head slowly back and bring your chin to your chest. Repeat this relaxing action a few more times with concentration and awareness.



Relax back into the Samasthiti Asana and enjoy the sense of relaxation that starts to seep into your entire neck, upper back and shoulder areas. Stress tends to accumulate in this area leading to the common neck pain and backaches that can be prevented and controlled with this simple practice.

Nishpanda Jathi (the rag doll action): This relaxing action is an excellent way to let go of the tensions that accumulate in the back. Stand with your legs two feet apart while keeping your arms by your side. Breathe in and then make a Bhastrika-like whooshing sound through your mouth and let your torso fall forward with both your arms dangling in a loose manner. After a few seconds of tension free relaxation slowly come back up to the upright posture while breathing in. Repeat the practice a few more times. When ready come back to the Samasthiti Asana and relax with deep breathing.



This Jathi can also be done while replacing the Bhastrika with the “Ha” sound as the torso falls forward. Stand with your legs two feet apart while keeping your arms by your side. Breathe in and then while breathing out make the Hakara Nada of HA as your torso falls forward. Dangle both your arms in a loose manner. After a few seconds of tension-free relaxation come back up to the upright posture while breathing in. Repeat the practice a few more times. When ready come back to the Samasthiti Asana and relax with deep breathing.

Kati Jathi (Torso grinding action): Stand with your legs a couple of feet apart and keep your hands on your hips. Slowly start to move your torso in the clock-wise direction in a grinding action. Move your torso forward, then to the right, then to the back and then to the left in a continuous manner. Perform this action a few times.

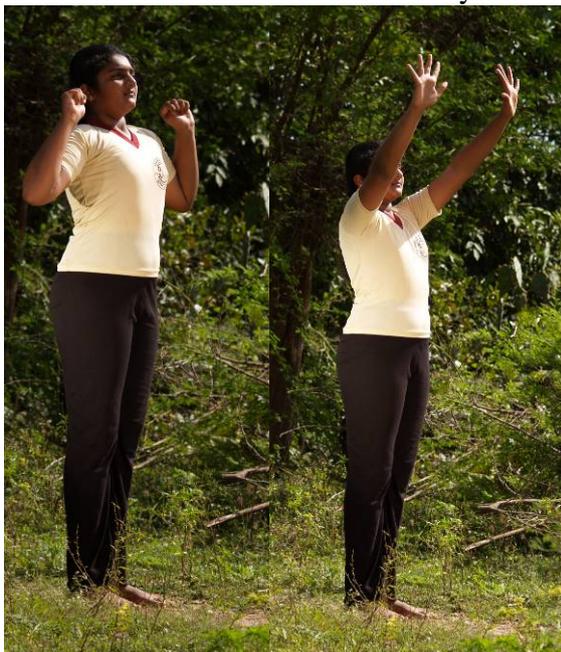
Then repeat the action in the opposite direction a couple of times. Stress and tension manifesting in the lower back and hip regions is relieved by this simple practice that can be done by most people without much trouble. When ready come back to the Samasthiti Asana and relax with deep breathing.



NASARGA MUKHA BHASTRIKA

Nasarga Mukha Bhastrika is a forceful expulsion of the breath through the mouth that can accompany different movements to relieve our pent up stress.

Take up a comfortable standing position and then start to shake your hands as vigorously as possible to help loosen up the accumulated tensions of your daily life. Visualize all the tensions that have accumulated in your wrist and elbow joints getting a good 'shake up' by



this action. When you have got the tensions loosened up, take in a deep breath through your nose and clench your fist as if catching hold of all your tensions and stress. Now with a powerful blast through your mouth "whoosh" away all your accumulated tensions and stress as forcibly as possible.

Again shake your hands as fast as possible. Breathe in and catch hold of the tension in your fist. Throw it all away with a blast. Make sure that you are using your diaphragm muscle vigorously while blasting out the breath in this practice. After performing 3 to 9 rounds of this practice, relax in the standing position and enjoy the feeling of relief that sweeps through your arms as you relax with some deep breathing.

RISHIKESH SURYA NAMASKAR

Surya Namaskar is a practice which has been handed down over millennia from the wise sages of the ancient Vedic times. 'Surya' means sun and 'Namaskar' means salutation. In ancient times the sun was worshipped as a daily ritual because it is a powerful symbol of spiritual consciousness. Worship of the outer and inner sun was a religious-social ritual, which attempted to placate those forces of nature beyond man's control. This variation of Surya Namaskar gets its name Rishikesh as it was popularized by the Swamis who resided in and around Rishikesh on the banks of the river Ganga.

Rishikesh Surya Namaskar, the Yogic sun salutation is a series of twelve physical postures. These alternating backward and forward bending postures flex and stretch the spinal column through their maximum range giving a profound stretch to the whole body. The basic breathing principle is to inhale during upward and backward bending postures and exhale during forward bending postures.

Stand erect with your feet close together. Perform Namaskar Mudra by joining your palms together in front of your chest.

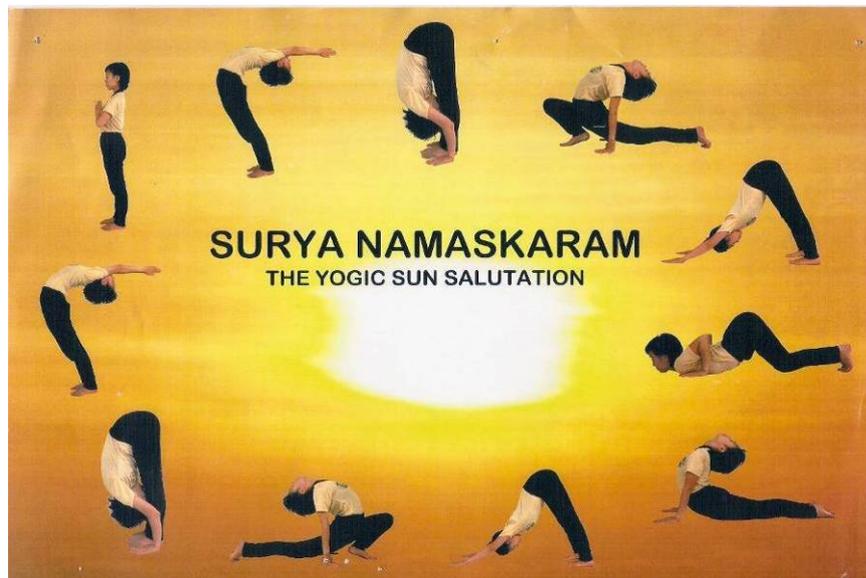
Breathe in and stretch your arms over your head into the Anjali Mudra and then arch your back. Feel the healthy stretch in your whole body.

Breathe out and bend forward while keeping your arms and back in one line and as straight as possible. Perform the Pada Hasta Asana by bringing your head to your knees while keeping your hands on either side of your feet.

Breathe in and extend your right leg back until it is straight as possible and you are balanced on your toes and hands. Your left leg should be bent with the sole flat on the ground. Lift your head and bend back and open up your chest. This is the Ashwa Sanchalana Asana, the equestrian posture.

While breathing out bring your left leg back towards the right and keep the feet just a foot apart with your heels flat to the ground. Simultaneously raise your buttocks and lower your head between your arms, so that your body forms a triangle with the ground. This is the Mehru Asana or mountain posture. While maintaining the posture, take a deep inhalation.

While breathing out drop both knees to the ground and slowly slide the body down at an angle and bring your chest and chin to the ground. Eight parts of your body namely your toes, knees, chest, hands and chin should touch the ground while the buttocks are kept up. You're your breath while performing this Ashtanga Bhumi Sparsha, the eight limbed prostration.



Breathe out and come into Bhujanga Asana, the Cobra posture. Focus your awareness at the base of your spine and feel a healthy stretch in your back and neck.

Exhale and come back to the Mehru Asana, the mountain posture. This strengthens the arms and legs as well as the spinal column.

Inhale and bring your right leg forward in-between your hands while keeping your left leg in its original position to perform the Ashwa Sanchalana Asana.

Breathe out and bring your left foot forward to come into the Pada Hasta Asana.

Breathe in and come up and perform the Anjali Mudra and bend backward.

Breathe out and come back to the standing while bringing your hands back to the chest in Namaskar Mudra.

To perform the Rishikesh Surya Namaskar on the opposite side perform the practice again with a slight modification. To complete the other half the same movements are repeated except that the left leg is brought back while performing the Ashwa Sanchalana the first time. The other postures such as Mehru Asana, Ashtanga Bhumi Sparsha and Bhujanga Asana are done in the same manner. When coming back to the Ashwa Sanchalana the left foot is brought forward and then the Pada Hasta is performed by joining right foot to the left before completing the practice with the Anjali Mudra and finally relaxing in the Sama Sthithi with deep breathing.

One full round consists of the 12 poses done twice in sequence. Practice 3 to 9 rounds of the Surya Namaskar daily for maximum benefit. When the exercises are done little quickly the gain is more physical and when they are done slowly with breath awareness the gain is more mental and spiritual.

THE TWELVE SUN MANTRAS

The traditional form of the Surya Namaskar Kriya is accompanied by sound runes called Mantrams. As the Namaskar is directed to the sun, the Mantras are all nomenclatures of the sun. the sun as the centre of man's life on this planet also extends to an esoteric reference to the sun of the Supreme Atman that cores the spiritual universe as well. Many of the Mantric names are also associated with that Atmic Sun, the spiritual core or Ultimate Reality.

The classical form of the Surya Namaskar has twelve parts, so that one of the twelve Mantras associated with each one of the twelve names of the sun is meditated upon during every parts of the Kriya. Some Yogis prefer to utter aloud the Mantra on the outgoing breath of each of the twelve parts. Beginning with Part 1, the twelve Mantras are:

1. Aum Mitraya Namah (Adoration to the "Friend of All");
2. Om Ravaye Namah (Adoration to the "One Who is Praised by All");
3. Om Suryaya Namah (Adoration to the "Guide of All");
4. Om Bhanave Namah (Adoration to the "Bestower of Beauty");
5. Om Khagaya Namah (Adoration to the "Stimulator of the Senses");
6. Om Pushne Namah (Adoration to the "Nourisher of Life");
7. Om Hiranyagarbhaya Namah (Adoration to the "Promoter of Virility");
8. Om Marichaye Namah (Adoration to the Destroyer of Disease");
9. Om Adityaya Namah (Adoration to the "Inspiritor of Love");
10. Om Savitre Namah (Adoration to the "Begetter of Life");
11. Om Arkaya Namah (Adoration to the "Inspiritor of Awe");
12. Om Baskaraya Namah (Adoration to the "Effulgent One").

Another method of including the Mantra for the twelve names of the sun is to chant one of the names of the sun, then do a full Surya Namaskar before chanting the second name of the sun.

A third method is to chant all twelve Mantras, one after the other, then do a full round of the Surya Namaskar Kriya, repeating the entire Mantra and the Kriya, two, four, six, or twelve times with complete concentration.

In the higher aspects of Yoga, the twelve names of the sun are synonymous with the function of the twelve psychic Chakras. Six of these Chakras are in the lower physical body and are known as the Shat Pinda Chakras, while the upper six “suns” are the Anand Chakras collectively known as the Maha Karana and are in the higher psychic body. The study and practice of this form of Yoga is called Kundalini or Laya Yoga. This inner phase of Yoga must be taught by a realized Guru. Otherwise, errors can be made, leading to frustration of the spiritual goal.

The name of God in sound, the Cosmic Vibration of AUM, is used as an invocation before all Yoga Kriyas and Mantras. Its vernacular form is OM. The AUM stands for the trinity in the Cosmos and Microcosm. Many Yogis utter this Pranava, AUM or OM, while doing the Surya Namaskar Kriya. Some Yogis utter the Mantra OM JYOTIR or OM JYOTIRNAMAHA before doing either of the Mantras with each outgoing breath of the Kriya.

STANDING ASANAS

ARDHA KATI CHAKRASANA



Stand in a steady Samasthiti Asana with your arms by your side. Breathe in and lift your right arm over your head. Try to extend the arm over your head towards the left as far as possible without bending it. This gives a good stretch to the entire right side of the body. Slowly start to breathe out and lower your arm slowly back to the side. Repeat the practice a few more times.

Make sure that you lift your arm on the in breath and lower it on the out breath.

Perform the practice on the opposite side by lifting your left arm over your head while breathing in. Extend it as far towards the right as possible without bending it. Feel the excellent stretch on the entire left side of your body. Lower your arm back to your side while breathing out. Repeat the practice a few more times.

The Ardha Kati Chakrasana helps to stretch and tone up the musculature of the arms, shoulders and the Para-spinal area in a way not done in day-to-day life. This helps trigger the relaxation response in these tissues that are normally tensed due to disuse, misuse and abuse. A sense of profound relaxation is obtained after the practice of this activity that is also known as the Hasta Kona Kriya.

PADA ANGUSHTHA ASANA



Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Jump with the feet one foot apart and stretch the arms parallel to each other above the head. Slowly bring the hands down to the feet and catch hold of the great toe with the thumb and fore fingers. Lift the head and stretch the back. Then push the head in between the two knees and hold the position for 30 seconds. Release and come back in the same manner as you have gone into the pose. Relax in Samasthiti Asana with a few rounds of deep breathing.



HASTHA PADA ASANA

This is performed in a very similar way as the Pada Angushtha Asana except that the palms are placed under the soles of the feet so that you are standing on your hands.

BENEFITS: Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs. Normalizes blood supply the brain and head region and increases the blood supply to the upper part of the body. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Improves the sense of balance and coordination.



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TRIKONA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Place your feet two to three feet apart facing forwards.

Stretch your arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.

Turn your head and right foot to the right side and slowly bring your right hand down to the right foot and place the palm of the right hand on the ground in front of the right foot. Look up at the middle finger of the left hand. Let the entire torso get a good twist and stretch.

Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep breathing.

Release and come back up to the open arm position and then do the opposite side by placing your left hand down in front of the left foot. Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep breathing.

When ready slowly come back up to the Samasthiti Asana and relax with a few rounds of deep breathing.



BENEFITS: Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs. Gives a good twist to the spine. Strengthens the neck muscles. Relieves stiffness of the upper and lower extremities. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Improves the sense of balance and coordination. Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region. Improves the confidence levels of the individual

PARSHAVA KONA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Place your feet three feet apart and stretch your arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.

Turn your head and right foot to the right side and bend the right knee. Bring the right hand down to the right foot and place the palm of the right hand on the ground in front of the right foot. Look up at the middle finger of the left hand. Let the entire torso get a good twist and stretch.



Stretch the left arm over the head and continue to look at the middle finger of the left hand. Hold the position for 30 seconds while performing deep breathing. Release and come back up to the wide arm position in the same manner as you have gone into the posture.

Repeat on the opposite side by taking your left hand down in front of the left foot and then stretching your right arm over your head. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with relaxed breathing. Come back to the Samasthiti Asana step by step and then relax with a few rounds of deep breathing.

VEERA ASANA-I: THE HERO'S POSTURE

Take up the Samasthiti position and breathe in. Breathe out and jump with your feet three to four feet apart. Breathe in and turn your right foot and your head to the right side. Breathe out and bend your right knee, creating a 90 degree angle in the space behind the knee. The knee should be directly over the ankle, and the arms should be stretched straight out from the shoulders. The torso is held erect and the chest opened up as much as possible. Hold this position, breathing deeply and counting slowly to ten. When ready, stand up by straightening your knee on the in breath. Hold in the breath, turn your right foot and your head back to the front.



Turn your left foot and your head to the left side. Breathe out and bend your left knee. Hold the final position and, breathe deeply and count slowly to ten. When ready, slowly come back to the standing position on the in breath. Hold in the breath and turn your left foot and your head back to the front. Breathe out, lower the arms to the side, and jump back to the Samasthiti position. Relax in the Samasthiti Asana, and then perform the entire routine twice more on both sides.

VEERA ASANA-II —THE HERO'S POSTURE

Take up the Samasthiti position and breathe in. Breathe out and jump with your feet three to four feet apart. Breathe in and turn your right foot and your head to the right side. Breathe out and bend your right knee, creating a 90 degree angle in the space behind the knee. The knee should be directly over the ankle, and the arms should be stretched straight out from the shoulders. The torso is held erect and the chest opened up as much as possible.

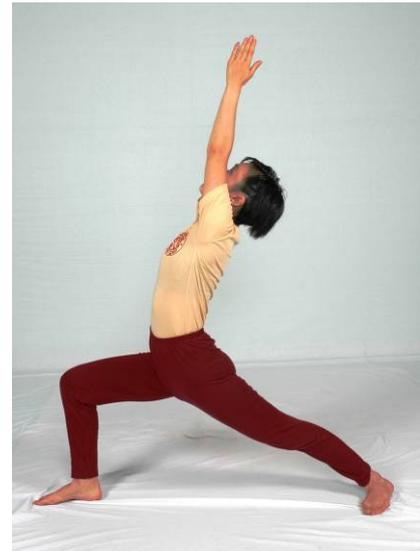
Hold out the breath and turn your arms straight out to the sides. On the next incoming breath, stretch your arms high over the head and perform the Anjali Mudra by bring the palms of both hands together. Look up at your hands.

Keep your left leg as straight as possible while the right knee is kept bent at the 90 degree. Hold this position with deep breathing, counting slowly to ten.

When ready, release the Anjali Mudra and lower your arms back down equal to the shoulders on the out breath. Hold out the breath come back to the Veera Asana-I.

Breathe in and straighten your knee, and keep standing with your arms still extended out from your shoulders. Hold in the breath and turn your head and the right foot back to the front. Turn your head and left foot to the left and repeat the whole procedure on the left side before returning to the Samasthiti position. Rest in this posture before repeating twice more on left and right sides.

BENEFITS: Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs. Relieves stiffness of the upper and lower extremities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Improves the sense of balance and coordination. Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region. Improves the confidence levels of the individual. Develops the mental strength that we need in order to face the battles of life with courage.



PADOTTANA ASANA

Stand in Samasthiti Asana. Jump with the feet three to four feet apart and stretch the arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.

Now stretch the arms parallel to each other above the head and slowly bring the hands down to the floor in between the feet. Lift the head and stretch the back. Then push the head

in between the two knees and place it on the floor with the hands on the floor on either side of the head. Hold the position for 30 seconds.

Release and come back in the same manner as you have gone into the pose and relax in Samasthiti Asana with a few rounds of deep breathing.

BENEFITS: Stretches and tones up the musculature of the entire back as well as upper and lower extremities. Normalizes blood supply to the brain and head region and increases the



blood supply to the upper part of the body. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Improves the sense of balance and coordination. Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region and stretches the groin and inner thigh region in a healthy manner.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing all of these standing postures. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the postures too long. Patients of Glaucoma and acute infections of the head and neck region and acid peptic disorders shouldn't perform the head below heart postures until their medical condition improves. Patients of cervical spondylitis shouldn't put their entire weight on the head while performing postures and should proceed with care.

VRIKSHA ASANA AND VRIKSHA KRIYA



A Kriya or structured set of movements can be performed out of Vriksha Asana, the tree pose by using several Hastha Mudras with the arms extending out like the branches of a tree.

From the Samasthiti Asana, perform Vriksha Asana by bringing your left foot onto your right thigh while standing on your right leg. After attaining to a stable Vriksha Asana bring your hands into the Namaskar Mudra. Lift your hands high over the head into the Anjali Mudra while taking a deep inhalation. Breathe out and slowly lower your hands straight out to the side, with your arms in line with your shoulders. Make sure that your palms are kept facing upward.

Breathe in and bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra at the chest. Rest in the Namaskar Mudra and perform a slow exhalation. Breathe in slowly and extend your hands forward into the Agra Mudra. Breathe out while slowly bringing your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra at the chest.

This completes one round of the Vriksha Kriya. To perform a second round of this practice, bring your hands into the Namaskar Mudra. Breathe in and lift your hands into the Anjali Mudra. Breathe out and slowly lower your hands straight out to the side. Breathe in and bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra. Rest in the Namaskar Mudra and perform a slow exhalation. Breathe in slowly and extend your hands into the Agraa Mudra. Breathe out and slowly bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra. At least three rounds of this movement and breath coordination activity should be performed while balancing on one leg, before performing the Kriya while balancing on the opposite side. Slowly release the hand and foot position and come back to the Samasthiti Asana for a period of quiet relaxation and contemplation.

BENEFITS: This practice improves coordination and stimulates powerful energy currents in the upper portion of the body. Improves the sense of concentration, balance and coordination in the limbs. It helps correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region. Stretches and tones up the musculature of the entire back as well as upper and lower extremities. Confidence levels of the individual are enhanced. Both sides of the brain are activated by this right-left coordination activity that is a wonderful tool to improve concentration and develop a greater attention span in young children.

MALLA KRIYA

This activity is loosely based upon the warm ups done by Indian wrestlers to prepare them to face the battle. It involves the use of the forceful Bhastrika breathing in synchrony with movement from the standing to the squatting position.

Stand in the Samasthiti Asana and clasp your elbows in front of your chest with the right hand on the left arm and the left hand on the right arm.

Take a deep breath in and then blast the breath out with a ‘whoosh’ and at the same time come down to the squatting Utkat Asana. Breathe in and at the same time come back up to the standing position. Blast out the breath and go into the Utkat Asana. Breathe in and come back up to the standing position. Blast out and go into the Utkat Asana. Perform at least 9 rounds of this practice.



At the end of the Malla Kriya relax in the Utkat Asana, the squatting posture that is valuable for the proper functioning of our abdominal and pelvic organs that make up our digestive and urinary systems. Your feet should be as flat to the ground as possible. Wind your arms tightly around your legs as if embracing yourself. Give yourself a good hug and feel the pressure that is generated in the abdominal region. All the organs are given a good massage and the whole digestive and urinary systems are invigorated.



When ready release the posture and come into any sitting position. Enjoy the renewed circulation of fresh blood into your abdomen and pelvis. Utkat Asana is valuable for those suffering stress disorders such as diabetes mellitus, indigestion, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulceration and impotency.

SITTING ASANAS

SUKHA ASANA

To perform Sukha Asana, the pleasant posture, sit on the ground with both your legs stretched out in front. Bend your left knee and then your right to pull the legs in and sit with your legs crossed at the ankles. Clasp your hands together to form the Yoga Mudra with fingers of your right hand dominant over the left. Sit straight and perform deep and controlled breathing. Sukha Asana, the comfortable posture is an excellent pose for relaxation, concentration and meditation. It can be performed by most people in spite of their stressed out physical condition that prevents them from attaining to more complicated sitting postures. Perform the Sukha Pranayama by breathing in and out for an equal count of 6 while sitting in this comfortable posture.



BENEFITS: Develops stability and concentrative abilities of the mind thus enhancing inner and outer awareness. Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions. Helps control the Karmendriyas, the action senses and focus the mind in preparation for the higher Antaranga aspects of Yoga. Improves the flexibility of the lower limb and strengthens the knee and ankle joints.

VAJRA ASANA

To perform this Asana, sit on the ground with both your legs stretched out in front. Slowly bend both your knees and come into a kneeling posture. Gently sit down on your heels so as to put the weight of your entire body on your heels and ankles. Try to keep the ankles and heels of both feet as close together as possible.

Sit straight with your spines erect and place both your palms on the respective thigh. Perform a few rounds of deep and controlled breathing while in this posture.

When ready, slowly come back up onto the knees and then relax by sitting on the ground with your feet stretched out in front. Shake your feet a few times and then thump your thighs to relieve the legs of any accumulated tension.

BENEFITS: A conducive posture for breathing practices as the lungs are free to expand to maximum capacity. Develops stability and concentrative abilities of the mind. Enhances inner and outer awareness. Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions. Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities. Helps correct mild to moderate conditions of varicose veins and sciatica. Helps focus the mind in preparation for the higher Antaranga aspects of Yoga..



LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing these sitting postures. Such postures are better avoided in those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint, ankle joint and severe forms of varicose veins.

MUKHA BHASTRIKA AND DHARMIKA ASANA

Mukha Bhastrika is a Yogic technique in which the breath is blasted out through the mouth in multiple 'whooshes'. It helps to cleanse the entire system and let go of stressful residues.



While sitting in the Vajra Asana, take in a deep breath filling all three parts of your lungs. Pucker up your mouth to form the Kaki Mudra which is like a crow's beak. Start to blast out your breath in multiple whooshes while at the same time slowly bringing your forehead down to the ground. Slowly raise the head and come back to the Vajra Asana while inhaling and then repeat the entire process by blasting out the breath and bringing your head down to the floor. Perform this practice at least three times.

ground.

Concentrate on that point of your forehead that is touching the ground and visualize an early morning sunrise. Dharmika Asana helps to develop concentration and improve our memory power. When ready slowly lift your head and then come back up to the Vajra Asana on an in breath.

Relax in the Dharmika Asana with your nose in between your knees. Keep your arms alongside your body and catch hold of your heels while letting your elbows relax to the



SUPTA VAJRA ASANA

Sit in Vajra Asana. Bend back with care and place your right elbow on the ground followed by the left. Carefully bring your head down to the ground. Once your head is settled firmly on the ground, bend your back as much as possible while keeping your arms alongside your body. Catch hold of your heels using the respective hands with your elbows relaxed to the sides. Perform some deep breathing in this position.



When ready release your heels and then use your right and left arms to slowly push yourself back to the Vajra Asana.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint, ankle joint and severe forms of varicose veins. Patients of cervical spondylitis shouldn't put their entire weight on the head while performing the posture and should proceed with care.

CHATUS PADA ASANA

The upright stance of the human being is one of the main causes of many health related problems due to the negative effects of gravity on our internal organs, back and blood vessels. Yoga offers us a simple remedy that is based on a keen observation of the animal

life. This is the performance of the Chatus Pada Asana where we simulate our four-footed animal brethren.

This neutralizes the negative effects of gravity on the human body and corrects lumbago, organ prolapse, piles, varicocele and varicose veins that are primarily caused as a result of our standing upright on our feet.

To perform this pose, sit in an erect Vajrasana and then place both your palms on the ground in front of you. Lift your buttocks off your heels and adjust your hands and feet in such a way that you are in a four footed pose. Your weight should be balanced on your hands and knees thus giving this Asana its name.



Keep your body parallel to the ground and perform deep and rhythmic breathing. When we perform Chatus Pada Asana our body organs are free from the negative effects of gravity that are otherwise present during the upright stance of our daily life.

After performing the posture for a comfortable period of time, slowly relax back to the Vajrasana and enjoy the feeling of relief that is produced by this simple yet effective posture.

CHATUS PADA KRIYA

This action is performed by moving around your area in the four footed Chatus Pada Asana. Take up a comfortable Chatus Pada Asana and then slowly move forward on all fours. Then start to move backward a few steps. Chatus Pada Kriya is an excellent practice for women especially during pregnancy as it relaxes the spine and helps in improving the pelvic circulation.

Take a few steps to your right and then take a few steps to your left. This is also very useful for those suffering from neck and back troubles as it takes the load off the body weight off the spine.

Start to move in a circle around your area in one direction while using all the joints of your arms and legs. Repeat the practice in the opposite direction. The Chatus Pada Kriya is good for patients of mild to moderate arthritis but must be done carefully and on a soft surface to avoid trauma to the knees.

Continues moving around in the four footed posture and then when ready slowly relax back to the Vajrasana and then stretch your feet out for some relaxation.

VYAGRAHA PRANAYAMA

The tiger breath is an important practice to relieve numerous musculoskeletal problems that are the bane of modern life.

Take up the Chatus Pada Asana with your weight evenly distributed between your hands and knees. Start breathing in and out for an equal count of six.



While breathing in slowly lift your head and arch your back downwards. Then breathe out slowly and lower your head while arching your back upwards. Breathe in while lifting your head and arch your back down. Breathe out while lowering your head and arching your back up. Repeat this excellent practice at least nine times at each session. Vyagraha Pranayama helps us to utilize all sections of our lungs in a balanced and controlled manner thus energizing the whole body with healing Pranic energy. This is also very good for those suffering from musculoskeletal disorders of the joints. It is a simple and yet effective practice to prevent and manage the numerous gynecological disorders of women such as menstrual irregularities and genital prolapse. It is a boon for the pregnant woman as it takes the heavy load off her spine and helps in the post delivery period as an important component of rejuvenation and rehabilitation. When ready slowly relax back to the Vajrasana for a period of quiet contemplation.

USHTRA ASANA

Ushtra Asana, the Camel Posture, is done from the heel-sitting Vajrasana. On an incoming breath, raise your body off your heels and come up onto your knees. Keep your eyes open and slowly back-bend. Take your hands back and catch hold of your heels with your hands. Push your lower back forward to help attain a good posture.

Once you have reached this final position do half a dozen forceful Bhastrikas or Bellows-like breaths with total awareness on the movements of your diaphragm. Breathe in through your nose and blast out through your mouth. This practice is known as the Nasargha Mukha Bhastrika.

Slowly sit down while breathing out and come back to the Vajra Asana. Repeat the practice two more times.

It is important that you keep your eyes open in order to avoid fainting or falling over especially in the beginning as your brain has to get used to the new patterns of circulation that occur in this posture.

Slowly come back up to the Vajrasana and relax with some deep abdominal breathing for a few minutes.

BENEFITS: Improves breath capacity. Stretches the spinal column and produces a healthy spine and resilient back muscles. Helps strengthen the diaphragm and the solar plexus, building up physical power, endurance and resistance to disease. Massages and stimulates the abdominal organs through the extensive movements of the diaphragm. Helps air to flow predominantly into the lower area of the chest producing good psychosomatic relaxation.



DANDA KRIYA

Danda Kriya is a systematic and rational movement that energizes the entire spinal column. It also helps us to unite our breath with our body movement and thus corrects numerous psychosomatic ailments.

Sit in Vajra Asana and take in a deep breath. Breathe out and slowly lower your head to the ground in the Dharmika Asana. On the next incoming breath slowly raise your buttocks up into the Purna Sasha Asana. Lower your buttocks while breathing out and come into the Dharmika Asana. Slowly come back to the Vajra Asana while breathing in and then breathe out while sitting in the Vajra Asana.

On the next incoming breath slowly come up onto your knees and bend your back to perform Sapurna Ushtrasana, the incomplete camel posture with your hands dangling loose at the side of your body. Keep your eyes open to avoid feeling dizzy and slowly come back to the Vajra Asana while breathing out. This completes one round of the Danda Kriya. Repeat this Kriya a minimum of three to six rounds at each session for maximum benefit.

The Danda Kriya is an excellent practice to develop spinal health and relax the mind. It is important that you make sure you are breathing while moving, as the most important aspect of the practice is to unify your body movements with your breath cycle. This helps to restore the vital mind-body connection and produces sound health and well being.

After completing three to six rounds of the practice slowly relax in Vajrasana with deep and relaxed breathing.



LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This should be avoided in those suffering from ligament tears of the knee and ankle joints. Those suffering from disorders causing disturbance in balance and equilibrium should not perform the practice without assistance.

PASCHIMOTTANA ASANA

Sit in Uttana Asana. Breathe in and raise your arms over your head. Clasp the fingers together and turn them up to perform Danda Asana. Open the hands and bend forward from your lower back until you can catch the big toes of both feet with the respective index finger and thumb. Bend further forward, until your face rests on your knees.

Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing.

When ready release the fingers and stretch back into the Danda Asana. Come back to the Uttana Asana. Lie down in Shava asana and relax for some time with deep breathing.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long.



BADDHAKONA ASANA: THE BOUND ANGLE POSTURE

Sit on the ground with your legs stretched out in front. Bend your right knee and bring your right foot inwards until the right heel is close to your perineum. Bend your left knee and bring your left foot in until the soles of both your feet are touching each other.

Catch hold of your feet with your hands. Grip the outer side of your feet and try to make your thighs touch the ground as much as possible. Make sure that your spine is as straight as possible. Close your eyes and contemplate the pelvic region. Perform 3 rounds of the Moola Bandha, the anal lock by tightening up your perineal musculature for a short period of time before relaxing it.



You may also perform 5 to 15 rounds of the Aswini Mudra by alternately tightening and relaxing your perineal musculature as in the defecating action of the horse. When ready slowly release the position and stretch your legs forward for a few rounds of deep breathing in the Uttana Asana.

BENEFITS: An excellent posture for improving the pelvic circulation and so is useful in gynecological disorders in women and male sexual disorders such as erectile dysfunction. Develops stability and concentrative abilities of the mind. Enhances inner and outer awareness. Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions. Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities. Improves the flexibility of the lower limb and strengthens the hip, knee and ankle joints. Conducive posture for the performance of Moola Bandha and Ashwini Mudra. Both the Moola Bandha and the Ashwini Mudra help to energize the entire system and are useful in patients suffering from piles or genital prolapse.

YOGA MUDRA ASANA: THE GESTURE OF UNION

Yoga Mudra, the Gesture of Union is done from Padma Asana, the Lotus Posture. There are two hand positions that may be used in this Mudra. In the first position which is relatively simple the right hand is used to catch the left wrist behind the back.

The second position is more difficult and is done by crossing the hands behind the back so as to catch the right foot with the right hand and the left foot with the left hand.

Once the hand position has been attained, the head is lifted on an in-breath and an excellent stretch given to the entire spinal column. The head is then brought down to the ground slowly on an out-breath. The forehead or chin may be placed on the ground depending on your ability and flexibility. Shallow Sukshma Pranayama or butterfly-like subtle breathing is done in the final position to attain a quiet state of psychophysical union.



When ready, come back up to the sitting position on an in-breath. Slowly and carefully release the hands and then the feet and enjoy a short period of relaxation with your feet stretched out in front.

BENEFITS: This Mudra helps relieve abdominal disorders of many kinds and is especially useful for patients of Diabetes Mellitus as well as liver and digestive disorders. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Gives a good stretch to the whole back and neck region and helps realign the shoulder in line with the back. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Helps to focus the mind in the Sahasrara Chakra, the crown centre. The Bhija Mantras for all the chakras can be chanted in this posture or the Om Namashivaya Mantra can be used to create Chakra Awareness.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from acute abdominal disorders where the condition may be aggravated by the pressure on the abdomen. Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint.

VAKRA ASANA

Sit erect with your legs stretched out in the Uttana Asana. Bend your right knee and place the right foot by the side of the left knee. Turn to your right and place your right hand on the ground behind you to support your erect position. Bring your left arm round the outer side of the right knee and catch hold of the right big toe. The left shoulder blade rests on the outer side of the upright right knee.

Turn your head and look back over your right



shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your torso as straight as possible. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

This posture gives an excellent massage to the abdominal organs and is very useful for those suffering from diabetes as well as digestive disorders. It is also useful for neck and back problems.

Repeat the practice on the opposite side. Bend your left knee and place the left foot by the side of the right knee. Turn to your left and place your left hand on the ground behind you to support your erect position. Bring your right arm round the outer side of the left knee and catch hold of the left big toe. The right shoulder blade rests on the outer side of the upright left knee.

Turn your head and look back over your left shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your torso as straight as possible. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

ARDHA MATSYENDRA ASANA

Sit erect with both legs stretched out in front and your palms gently pressing on the ground by your sides in Uttana Asana. Fold your right knee and place the heel tight in against the perineum. Place your left foot by the side of your right thigh by crossing it over the knee. Bring your right hand round the outer side of the left knee passing between the chest and the knee and catch hold of the left big toe. Your right shoulder blade rests on the outer side of your left knee.



Take your left hand round your back and try to get a grip on your right thigh. Look back over your left shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your trunk vertical. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. This posture gives an excellent massage to all the abdominal organs and is very useful for those suffering from diabetes as well as digestive disorders.

Release and come back to the Uttana Asana.

Repeat on the opposite side by folding your left knee with the heel tight in against the perineum. Place your right foot by the side of your left thigh by crossing it over the knee. Bring your left hand round the outer side of the right knee passing between the chest and the knee and catch hold of the right big toe. Your left shoulder blade rests on the outer side of your right knee.

Take your right hand round your back and try to get a grip on your left thigh. Look back over your right shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your trunk vertical. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing.

When you are ready slowly release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

BENEFITS: Twists the abdominal area and gives a healthy massage to the abdominal organs of digestion and elimination. Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region Useful for patients of obesity and diabetes mellitus..

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back, neck, shoulder and knee injuries should exercise caution in performing these practices. Those with enlarged liver or spleen must not perform this posture till their medical condition improves. It is contraindicated for those suffering from acute abdominal disorders where the condition may be aggravated by the pressure on the abdomen.

LYING DOWN ASANAS

BHUVANGA ASANA

Lie down in the face prone Unmukha Asana with your hands by your sides. Keep your chin on the ground with your entire body from toes to head in a straight line. Bend both your elbows and place the palms on the ground by the side of your chest. Slowly lift your head and then raise your chest until your arms are as straight as possible. Do not lift your navel off the ground. Feel the awareness of the bending at the lumbar region. After a few seconds relax and bring your chest and head down, touching the ground with your chin. Release your hands and then relax in the Unmukha Asana.



Repeat the practice at least two more times for maximum benefit to the muscles of the lower back and posterior region.

BENEFITS: This practice helps tone up the muscles of the entire posterior region. Helps to redistribute fatty accumulation from the hip and lower back region. Tones up the entire spine and increases the flexibility. Useful for patients of backache, neck pain and shoulder tension. Helps correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region. Removes fatigue and reenergizes the entire psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine system.

Relaxes the shoulder and upper back region. Helps to relieve breathing and digestive disorders. Builds up self confidence.

BHUVANGINI MUDRA

To perform the Cobra gesture, take up the Unmukha Asana which is a prone position with your entire body in a straight line. In this technique the emphasis is on the breathing pattern and the production of a mighty hissing sound through the clenched teeth. Slowly bring your arms forward and keep your palms on the ground alongside your shoulders. Take in a deep breath. While making a mighty hissing sound, flare back into the Bhujanga Asana. Slowly

relax back onto the floor while breathing in and then again flare back with a mighty hiss. Repeat this Mudra at least three to six times at each session.

This technique helps release the pent up stress that accumulates in our system from our daily life and provides great emotional and mental relief. It is an excellent stress-buster and is a must for all in this day and age.

After completing the practice come back down to the face prone pose. Place your arms alongside your body and turn your head to the side. Relax for a few minutes and let the benefit of this Mudra seep into each and every cell of your body.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back problems and spinal injuries should proceed with care and caution. Patients of hernias and intra abdominal space occupying lesions should avoid this posture as it may increase the intra-abdominal pressure. Those with dislocation of shoulder should avoid this posture until there condition improves.

MATSYA ASANA

Sit straight with your legs stretched out in front of you. Fold up your legs and perform the Padma Asana or Sukha Asana.

Place your palms on the ground alongside your body. Bend your elbows and relax backwards until your elbows are flat on the ground. Support your body with your forearms and let your head fall back in a relaxed position until it touches the ground.

Perform an exaggerated supine back-bend and force your shoulders off the ground so that the weight of your entire torso is well-balanced on the top of your head.

Place your hands on top of your thighs while keeping your elbows on the ground. If possible catch your toes with your fingers while bringing both your elbows down to the ground.



Perform at least three to six rounds of deep breathing in this position before returning back to the Padmasana or Sukha Asana in a careful step-by-step manner. Unlock your feet and stretch them forward into the Uttana Asana and then slowly return to the supine Shava Asana.

A couple of rounds of head rolling from side to side in Shava asana can help release any pent-up tension in the neck that may occur after performing the Fish Posture.

BENEFITS: Improves the flexibility of the lower back, knee and ankle joints. Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions. Enhances thyroid function and eliminative capacities. Improves breathing capacity due to chest wall expansion with

focus on the middle chest region. Pelvic region is reenergized and the intra pelvic structures are toned up in a healthy manner

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing this practice. This posture is contraindicated for those suffering from ligament tears of the knee joint, ankle joint and severe back pain. Patients of cervical spondylitis shouldn't put their entire weight on the head while performing the posture and should proceed with care. Heart patients should first practice the simpler variations with legs extended before proceeding to the final posture depending on their medical condition.

ARDHA SHALABHA ASANA

Lie down in the Unmukha Asana. On an in breath slowly raise your right leg as high as possible without bending the knee. Hold the leg as straight and as high as possible for a few seconds without tilting on to your side and then on the out breath release the posture and return back to the face prone posture. Repeat this three times.



Perform the same practice on the opposite side. On an in breath slowly raise your left leg as high as possible without bending the knee. Hold the leg as straight and as high as possible for a few seconds without tilting on to your side and then on the out breath release the posture and return back to the face prone posture. Repeat this three times.

SHALABHA ASANA

Lie down in the Unmukha Asana. Clench the fists and place them under the root of the thigh. On an in breath raise both the legs together up from the waist. Hold the legs as straight and as high as possible for a few seconds and then on the out breath release the posture and return back to the face prone posture.



BENEFITS: Helps tone up the muscles of the entire posterior region. Redistributes fatty accumulation from the hip and lower back region.. Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and torso musculature in a healthy manner. Improves flexibility of the lower back, knee and ankle joints. Improves blood circulation in the lower back, abdomen and pelvic regions. Enhances digestive and eliminative capacities. Helps correct structural deformities of the back, neck and shoulders. Realigns the hip and lower limb joints in a healthy manner

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating lower back injuries and arthritic conditions of the lower limb should exercise caution in performing these practices. Patients of hernias and intra-abdominal space occupying lesions should proceed with care as this posture may increase the intra-abdominal pressure. Patients of hypertension and heart ailments should exercise caution depending on their medical condition.

HALA ASANA

From Shava Asana lift both legs up towards the sky on the in breath. Take the legs over the head until the toes touch the ground beyond the head. Do not bend the knees. Stretch the arms out behind the back or hold on the lower back with the elbows on the ground.

Hold the posture for a few seconds with lighter breathing and when ready lower the legs back to the ground as you breathe out.

Repeat the Hala Asana at least three times and you will find that with practice you will be able to hold the posture for longer duration of time.

Come back to Shava Asana, step by step and roll your head from side to side to ease away any pressure that may have accumulated in the neck.



Those who have neck problems shouldn't do this posture as it may aggravate the neck pain.

BENEFITS: Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs. Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and pelvic organs in a healthy manner. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Realigns the hip and shoulder joints in a healthy manner. Hala Asana revitalizes the entire endocrine system and is especially good for the Thyroid Gland. The thyroid gland is in charge of body metabolism and the increased metabolic activity burns up the excess calories effectively.

SARVANGA ASANA

Lie down in Shava Asana. Breathe in and lift both legs at a time until you are in the Dwi Pada Uttanpada Asana. Continue the upward motion and lift your back off the ground using

both arms to support the lower back. Keep your trunk and legs in a straight line by supporting the entire trunk on the shoulders.

Breathe in a shallow manner while concentrating on the healthy pressure at the throat region.

Release the posture after 10 to 15 seconds and while breathing out slowly come back to the Shava Asana.

Roll your head from side to side to ease away any pressure that may have accumulated in the neck. After a short relaxation, repeat the practice two more times.

BENEFITS: Sarvanga Asana revitalizes the endocrine system and is especially good for the Thyroid Gland. The thyroid gland is in charge of body metabolism and the increased metabolic activity burns up the excess calories effectively. Stretches and tones up the muscles of the entire back, arms and legs. Gives a healthy pressure to the abdominal organs and tones up the abdominal and pelvic organs in a healthy manner. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure. Helps to correct structural deformities of the spine, shoulders and upper back region.



Helps improve the drainage of blood from the lower limb and hence is useful for patients of varicose veins and piles. Helps to reduce prolapsed pelvic organs such as uterus and rectum back to their normal location. Also helps to reduce uncomplicated abdominal hernias. Realigns the hip and shoulder joints in a healthy manner and strengthens the shoulders. Improves the blood circulation to the head and upper body region. Improves concentration and memory power. Helps in lung drainage and strengthens the lungs thus benefiting patients of chronic lung disorders.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing these inverted practices. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the postures too long. Those suffering from neck problems, glaucoma and infections of the head and neck region must avoid Sarvanga and Hala Asana. This Asana is better avoided in young children below the age of 5 to 6 years as it may interfere with normal endocrine and skeletal growth.

PAWAN MUKTA ASANAS:

Lie down in a comfortable Shava asana and start to breathe in and out for an equal count of six or eight.



To perform the single legged Eka Pada Pawan Mukta Asana bend and lift your right knee while breathing in and simultaneously also lift your head off the ground. Catch hold of your knee with your arms and try to touch your knee to

your forehead. Hold the position a few seconds and then while breathing out slowly release the position and lower your head while at the same time bringing your foot back to the ground. Repeat this at least two more times to complete a set of three rounds of the practice.

Relax a few seconds in the Shava asana and then perform the practice on the left side.

Relax in Shava asana for a few minutes with deep and rhythmic breathing while concentrating on your abdominal area that will help to relax you further.



To perform the double legged Dwi Pada Pawan Mukta Asana bend and lift both your knees while breathing in. Bring them as close to your forehead as possible while simultaneously raising your head to meet the knees. Hold a few seconds and then while breathing out, lower your head and simultaneously bring your feet back to the ground. Repeat this two more times to complete a set of three rounds at each session.

Relax in Shava asana for a few minutes with deep and rhythmic breathing while concentrating on your abdominal area. This will help you to relax even further as the emotional tensions tend to tighten up the abdominal area leading to a feeling of “butterflies in the stomach”.

BENEFITS: This set of supine postures is a great way to get rid of the stress and tension that tends to accumulate in the abdominal region. They are also useful to prevent and control the various joint disorders that afflict the limbs and the abdominal organs. Help prevent and relieve joint pains, gas troubles and abdominal problems such as indigestion and constipation. Useful for those suffering from gas problems, constipation, diabetes and sluggish liver and kidneys. Enhances digestion and elimination capacities. Helps reduce the fatty accumulation around the abdomen, waist and hip region thus reshaping the body structure.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long. These postures are contraindicated for those suffering from acute abdominal disorders where the condition may be aggravated by the pressure on the abdomen.

NAVA ASANA: THE BOAT POSTURE

Lie down in Shava asana with your arms by your sides. While breathing in, slowly come up to the Uttana Asana. Hold in the breath and raise both feet off the ground until the toes are in the line with the nose. This is the Nava Asana, the Boat Posture.

The hands are placed onto the top of the thighs, close in against the body. On an outgoing breath, slowly lower the feet to the ground and then recline back allowing each vertebra of the spine to return to the ground, as though the treads of a caterpillar tractor. The posture is repeated two more times before relaxing to deep breathing in Shava Asana.



BENEFITS: The abdominal and thigh muscles are toned up in a healthy manner by the regular practice of Nava Asana. A massive supply of blood is also sent down into the pelvic area by the healthy tension of holding this posture. Effective for disorders of the intestines, liver, gall bladder and spleen. The practitioner gains strength in muscles of the back. Brings life and vigor to the entire back and enables one to move comfortably.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back and neck injuries should exercise caution in performing this practice. Patients suffering from cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, should exercise caution and not hold the posture too long.

MUDRAS

Mudra is the ancient Yogic art and science of gesturing and sealing vital Pranic energies in the human body for health, well being and spiritual evolution. These are advanced techniques designed to improve neuromuscular coordination, culture human emotions and still the restless mind.

CHIN MUDRA

This gesture of consciousness helps us to go within and attain to a state of elevated consciousness.

From a straight back sitting position such as the Vajrasana bring both hands up to the chest level with palms facing forward.

Join the tips of your thumbs and index fingers to form a perfect circle.

Keep the other three fingers straight and with their sides joined together in parallel.

Place the Chin Mudra on your thighs with the palm facing down.

This stimulates the femoral area that is located on the inner side of your thighs. Chin Mudra helps force the inhaled air to move primarily in the lower section of the lungs in Adham Pranayama. Close your eyes and perform a few rounds of deep breathing into the low lung area. Union of the thumb and index finger symbolizes the union of the Jivatma (the individual entity) with the Paramatma (the universal entity). The three other fingers are held straight and together to symbolize Pratyahara, the Yogic control of the senses.



CHINMAYA MUDRA

From a straight back sitting position such as Vajrasana, bring both your hands up to the chest level with your palms facing forward. Join the tips of your thumbs and index fingers together in a perfect circle as if performing the Chin Mudra. Curl the other fingers inward as if making a fist.

Place the Mudra on your lap to stimulate the femoral area on the inner side of the thighs. Close your eyes and breathe deeply as this Mudra helps to gesture Pranic energies into the middle region of the lungs in



Madhyam Pranayama. This helps to energize the entire chest region with healing Prana that can be useful in healing various heart and lung conditions.

ADHI MUDRA

Sit in Vajrasana and bring both your hands up to the chest level with your palms facing forward. Bend your thumbs into your palm and then close the other fingers into a fist over the thumb.

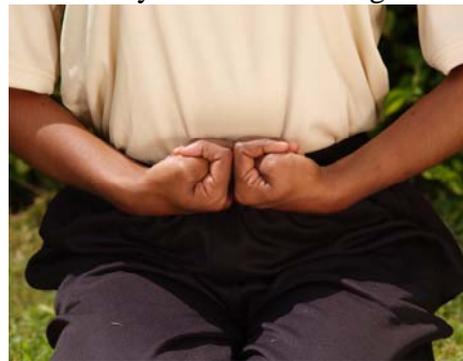
Place the Mudra on the inner side of the thighs with the knuckles facing outward. Close your eyes and take a couple of deep breaths as this Mudra helps us to breathe deeply into the upper section of our lungs.

Adhi Mudra helps send healing Pranic energies into the head, neck and upper part of our body when performing Adhyam Pranayama. This is very beneficial for those suffering from disorders of this vital region.



BRAHMA MUDRA OR MAHAT YOGA MUDRA

From a straight back sitting position lift your hands and make your hands into a fist as in Adhi Mudra. Place the Mudra in front of your navel with both your fists touching at their knuckles. The fist should face up while the outer aspects of the fingers face down. This Mudra helps facilitate the neuromuscular system and stimulates the respiratory system to function in a proper manner. Close your eyes and perform a couple of rounds of deep breathing utilizing all parts of your lungs in a holistic manner. This Mudra helps to correct numerous breathing difficulties that are the bane of the modern world. Pranic energies are gestured into all parts of the lungs producing a balanced and orderly pattern of breathing.



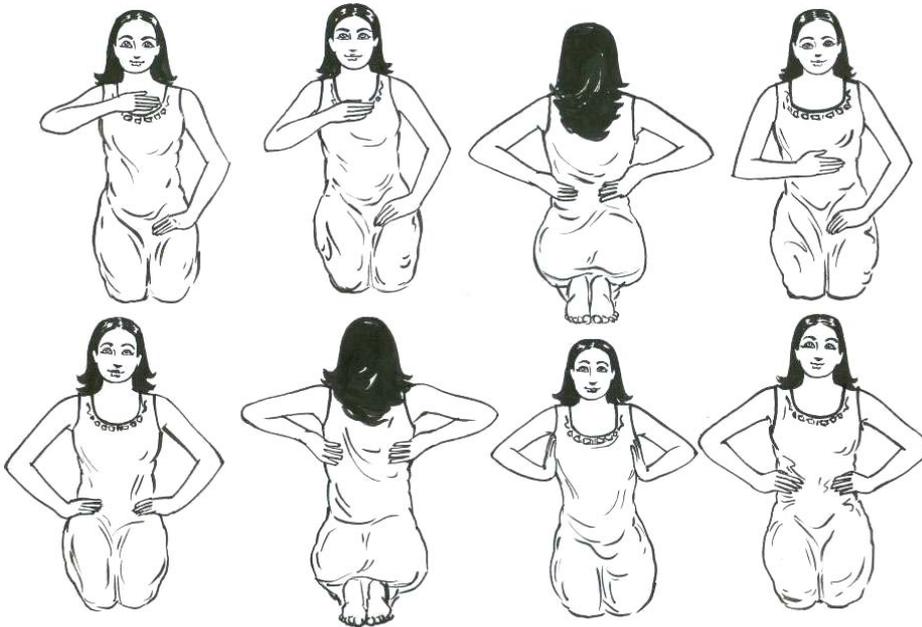
SPARSHA MUDRAS

Sparsha means to touch or feel with awareness and consciousness. The Sparsha Mudra or the touching gesture is performed by placing the palm of the hands on different parts of the body to facilitate the flow of Pranic energy to that part in order to produce certain effects. These Mudras are especially used to focus our awareness into the different segments of our lungs while performing Vibhagha Pranayama, the sectional breathing.

Sit in the Vajra Asana with your hands placed comfortably palms down on your thighs.

To become aware of the lower lobes of your lungs place both your palms onto your lower chest in the region of the diaphragm. This is the Adhama Sparsha Mudra. Let your hands be relaxed with your elbows to the sides. Breathe deeply with your awareness focused on the front section of your lower lungs. After a few rounds of deep breathing bring the Sparsha Mudra to the side section of your lower lungs and breathe deeply for a few rounds. Finally take the Sparsha Mudra to the back lower chest area and breathe deeply into the posterior section of your low lungs.

Now combine all three sections of the low lungs by breathing into the front, side and back areas with the respective Sparsha Mudras. Then breathe out first from the back section, then the side and finally the front section of the lower lung area. Perform this at least 9 times moving the hands from front to side and then to the back to enable you to concentrate and



focus your mind on those areas properly in the performance of Adham Pranayama.

To become aware of the middle lobes of your lungs place both your palms onto your mid chest region over the breasts. This is the Madhyama Sparsha Mudra. Let your hands be relaxed with the

elbows to the sides. Breathe deeply with your awareness focused on the front section of your middle lungs. After a few rounds of deep breathing bring the Sparsha Mudra to the side section of your middle lungs and breathe deeply for a few rounds. Finally take the Sparsha Mudra to the back middle back area and breathe deeply into the posterior section of your mid lungs. Now combine all three sections of the low lungs by breathing into the front, side and back areas with the respective Sparsha Mudras. Then breathe out first from the back section, then the side and finally the front section of the mid lung area. Perform this at least 9 times moving the hands from front to side and then to the back to enable you to concentrate and focus you mind on those areas properly in the performance of Madhyam Pranayama.

To become aware of the upper regions of your lungs place both your palms onto your upper chest region over the collar bone area. This is the Adhyama Sparsha Mudra. Let your hands be relaxed with your elbows to the sides. Breathe deeply with your awareness focused on the front section of your upper lungs. After a few rounds of deep breathing bring the Sparsha Mudra to the side of the hips so that the armpits are free from the body. Concentrate into the side upper lobes and let your breathing inflate the upper lobes situated under the armpits. The Sparsha Mudra is not placed under the armpits as that area is very sensitive with a great number of nerves and blood vessels. Finally raise your arms over the shoulders and place your palms onto the back upper lung area to help you concentrate your mind into the high back lobes. Now combine all three sections of the low lungs by breathing into the front, side and back areas with the respective Sparsha Mudras. Then breathe out first from the back section, then the side and finally the front section of the upper lung area. Perform this at least 9 times moving the hands from front to side and then to the back to enable you to concentrate and focus you mind on those areas properly in the performance of Adhyam Pranayama.

To perform Mahat Yoga Pranayama, the Grand Yogic Breath place your right hand in the Adhama Sparsha Mudra onto your diaphragmic region and your left hand in the Madhyama Sparsha Mudra at the mid chest. Start a long, slow, deep breath regulating the first two counts to the low lung area. Continue the breath into the mid chest for another two counts

and then fill the upper lungs for the next two counts while bringing the right hand into the Adhyama Sparsha Mudra over the clavicular area. Then let the breath out in the same order, first deflating the low, then the mid, and then finally the upper lung areas sequentially. Take a short rest at this point and then repeat the entire cycle for a total of three to six rounds.

All of these Sparsha Mudras are used to consciously direct the flow of Prana into the different lung segments thus producing a state of excellent health and well being. The proper flow of Pranic energy into the low chest region facilitated by the Adhama Sparsha Mudra is useful for patients suffering abdominal, pelvic and lower limb disorders. The use of the Madhyama Sparsha Mudra helps patients of heart and chest disorders while the Adhyama Sparsha Mudra helps those suffering from head and neck disorders to regain their health.

BRAHMA MUDRA FOR THE NECK

Brahma Mudra is a gesture of the head and neck and is an excellent practice for one and all. Take up any comfortable sitting position such as Vajrasana with your spine as erect as possible. Rest your hands on your lap while performing the Yoga Mudra.

Close your eyes and concentrate on this valuable practice that combines the use of physical movement synchronized with deep breathing and the usage of Nada or vibrational sounds involving utterance of the Bhija sounds of AAA, UUU, EEE and MMM.

Breathe in and turn your head towards the right 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out while bringing your head back to the central position and make the guttural sound AAA.

Slowly turn your head to the left while breathing in 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out and bring your head back to the central position making the labial sound UUU.

Slowly lift your chin up as if attempting to look at the sky and breathe in 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out and make the palatal sound EEE while bringing your head back to the central position.



Finally lower your head bringing chin to chest while breathing in 1-2-3-4-5-6. Breathe out and make the labial sound MMM while bringing the head back to the central position. Perform a minimum of 3 to 9 rounds of this practice at each sitting.

BENEFITS: Brahma Mudra is an excellent practice to prevent as well as relieve disorders of the cervical spine that are so common in this modern day and age. It is important to concentrate on the area of the neck to be relieved, repaired, or rejuvenated while sounding the Bhija Mantras. This produces excellent psychosomatic relaxation. It also gives us the psychological benefit of understanding the perspectives of others by seeing the ‘different viewpoints’.

ASHWINI MUDRA

Ashwini Mudra, the Horse Gesture is a simple and effective practice that has a wide range of physical, psychological as well as spiritual benefits.

This Mudra can be performed from any sitting position and is done by imposing an anal restraint called Moola Bandha on the external sphincter muscles of the anus and rapidly tensing and releasing the restraint, like the defecating action of a horse (Ashva).

This Mudra energizes the entire nervous system and is an excellent preventive and curative practice for hemorrhoids as well as disorders of the rectum, gonads and perineum.

It is useful before, during and after pregnancy and childbirth.

PRANAYAMAS

VIBHAGA PRANAYAMA (SECTIONAL BREATHING)

The Yogic method of breathing includes the conscious and controlled flow of air to all parts of the lungs. There are ten bronchopulmonary segments in each lung and yoga aims to teach us how to utilize them all to the maximum possible. This is a vital preparation for further Pranayama Sadhana and is a must for all sincere Yoga Sadhakas.



Abdominal (lower chest) breathing (Adham Pranayama): Use the palms of both hands to feel the breath move in the front, side and back regions of the low chest and abdomen. Use Chin Mudra to feel the same. (Join the thumb and index finger in a circular form. Other three fingers should be kept parallel to one another).



Thoracic (mid chest) breathing (Madhyam Pranayama): Use the palms of both hands to feel the breath move in the front, side and back regions of the mid chest. Use Chinmaya Mudra to feel the same (the index and thumb are joined like chin Mudra and other three fingers are closed to the palm).



Clavicular (upper chest) breathing- (Adhyam Pranayama): Use the palms of both hands to feel the breath move in the front, side and back regions of the upper chest and clavicular area. Use Adhi Mudra to feel the same (all fingers are closed in a fist over the thumb).

Complete breathing (Mahat Yoga Pranayama): Keep the left palm on the mid chest (heart) area and then move the right hand to feel the movement in low, mid and upper regions. Use Brahma Mudra (Mahat



yoga Mudra) to feel the same (hold the Adhi Mudra with both hands opposing at the knuckles in front of the navel).

SUKHA PRANAYAMA

Sit on the heels in Vajrasana and do deep but non-violent “in and out breath”. On the incoming breath let the abdominal area expand outwards and downwards as the diaphragm moves down. On the outgoing breath let the abdomen come back and upwards as the diaphragm moves up. The breathing is a simple in and out technique with no suspension of breath.

After this simple breathing is mastered, the time of the incoming and outgoing breath should be extended maintaining the 1:1 ratio. In severe breathing difficulties, the breath can be taken in for approximately a three count and let out for a similar three count. Later, a four by four, six by six, eight by eight, or even higher ratio may be attempted.

Another more complicated form of Sukha Pranayama (Sukha Purvaka) is to add a held in breath for the same duration as the incoming and the outgoing breath (1:1:1). Another variation is to include a held out breath after the outgoing breath (1:1:1:1).

SURYA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajra Asana and perform Nasarga Mudra with your right hand. Close your left nostril with your ring finger. Inhale slowly through your right nostril for a count of 6. Now exhale through the right nostril for a count of 6. Keep your left nostril closed at all times during the practice.



Repeat the Surya Nadi Pranayama for a minimum of nine to 27 rounds at each sitting. This Pranayama helps speed up metabolism and burns up extra fat that has accumulated due to hypo metabolic activity and wrong diet. With regular practice the breath count can be increased to a 6 in and 12 out pattern. For maximum benefit Surya Nadi Pranayama should be performed 27 rounds before breakfast, before lunch, before dinner and before going to bed at night.

The Surya Nadi Pranayama can also be done from the Surya Nadi Asana that is done from a lying down position. From the supine position turn onto your left side with your right side dominant. Bend your left arm and use it as a pillow. After some time, the flow of the breath will slowly become a right nostril dominant flow that mimics the Surya Nadi Pranayama. This right dominant body position promotes a healthy metabolic activity even as we either rest or sleep at night. Surya Nadi Pranayama should be avoided in patients of high blood pressure and high blood sugar as it may worsen the condition.



CHANDRA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajrasana and perform Nasarga Mudra with your right hand. Close your right nostril with your thumb. Inhale slowly through your left nostril for a count of 6. Now exhale through the left nostril for a

count of 6. Keep your right nostril closed at all times during the practice. With regular practice the breath count can be increased to a 6 in and 12 out pattern. Repeat the Chandra Pranayama for a minimum of nine rounds at each session. Patients of anxiety, hypertension, insomnia and other stressful conditions can benefit by practising this Pranayama 27 times before breakfast, lunch, dinner and before going to bed at night.

The Chandra Nadi Pranayama can also be done from the Chandra Nadi Asana that is done from a lying down position. From the supine position turn onto your right side with your left side dominant. Bend your right arm and use it as a pillow. After some time, the flow of the breath will slowly become a left nostril dominant flow that mimics the Chandra Nadi Pranayama. This left dominant body position promotes a healthy relaxation of the body-emotions-mind complex even as we either rest or sleep at night.

PRANAVA PRANAYAMA

‘Tasya vachakah pranavaha’, the sacred sound of the Divine is the Pranava says Maharishi Patanjali. This practice develops the abdominal, thoracic and clavicular regions of the lungs to their maximum capacity. Pranava Pranayama has unlimited healing potential and is useful in virtually all disorders. It brings about harmony of body, emotions and mind and is an important part of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition as taught by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj.

Adham Pranayama, the abdominal or lower chest breathing. Put the fingers into the Chin Mudra with the index and thumb fingers touching each other at the tips. Keep the other three fingers straight and united. Take a deep breath into the lower chest and abdominal regions..1..2..3..4. Now let out the breath with the sound aaa.....

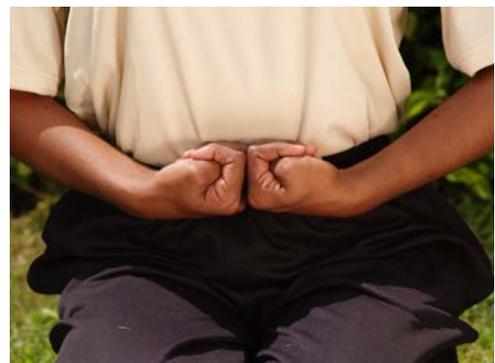


To perform thoracic or mid-chest breathing, the Madhyam Pranayama, curl your fingers inward to form Chinmaya Mudra. Take a deep breath into the mid chest and thoracic regions 1...2...3...4 . Now breathe out with the sound ooo.....



Adyam Pranayama is the clavicular or upper chest breathing and utilises Adhi Mudra. Clench your fists with your thumb in the centre. Keep the Adhi Mudra on your thighs and breathe deeply into the upper chest and clavicular regions 1...2...3...4... Now, exhale with the sound mmm.....

Joining the earlier three parts of the breath in a complete Yogic breath is the fourth stage, known as Mahat Yoga Pranayama. Put the Adhi Mudra with knuckles of your right and left hands touching in front of the navel. This is now known as the Brahma Mudra. Take a deep breath into the low 1...2...mid 3...4...and upper chest 5....6....regions. Now let the breath out with the sounds of aaa...ooo...mmm.... Relax in Vajrasana and enjoy the feeling of potent healing energy flow through the entire body.



BRAHMARI PRANAYAMA

Sit on the heels in the Vajrasana with the spine erect. Perform the Shanmuki Mudra with the thumbs of the hands closing the external auditory canal. The first two fingers are then placed over the closed eyelids while the ring fingers regulate the flow of air through the nostrils. The little fingers are placed over the closed lips.



This Mudra helps in joining together the nerves of the hands with the facial and trigeminal nerves on the face.

Take a slow and deep breath in for six counts. Let out the breath very slowly while making a sound in the nasal passages like the high-pitched sound of a female bee. This buzzing sound is very much like the Anuswarah sound of “mm” of the “AUM”. Repeat this at least nine times. Brahmari is one of the Swara Pranayamas and stimulates the secretions and tones up nerve centres. This helps relieve Pitta conditions and rejuvenates the skin. It also creates a beautiful voice. It is a contemplative prelude to Nada Yoga.

SAVITRI PRANAYAMA

In Savitri Pranayama, the Rhythmic Breath, each lobular segment of the lungs is filled as in the Mahat Yoga Pranayama, but a held in and a held out breath are added to the breath technique.

The incoming and the outgoing breath should be taken for an equal count, while the held in and the held out breath are only half of that duration time cycle. If a six count is used for the inspiration and expiration, then a three count should be used for the retained breaths (6x3x6x3). Longer ratios 8x4x8x4 are conventional Yoga practices. This breath provides an excellent deep relaxation and is very suitable for the relaxation position or for breathing done while stretched out back prone as in Shava asana the Corpse Posture. It can also be used along with the nature walks and the speed of walking timed to the breath cycles. Each of the rhythms of the Savitri Pranayama has its own additional benefits but those details are beyond the scope of this book.

KUKKRIYA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajrasana with the weight of your body firmly on both heels. Place your palms on the ground in front with your wrists touching your knees and the fingers pointing forward. Open your mouth wide and push your tongue out as far as possible.



Breathe in and out at a rapid rate with your tongue hanging out of your mouth. After 10 or 15 rounds relax back into the Vajrasana and feel the blood flow into your abdominal area. Repeat the whole practice three more times. Kukkriya Pranayama, the dog pant breath is an excellent cleanser and tones up the diaphragm and the abdominal organs that are in close approximation to the diaphragm.

RELAXATION

SHAVA ASANA

Lie supine on the ground with your head preferably to the north enabling your body to be in alignment with the earth's electromagnetic field. Make sure that your head and body are in a straight line while your hands are kept relaxed by your side with the palms facing upwards. Bring your feet together and then let your forefeet fall away into a 'v' shape with your heels as close together as possible.



Start to consciously watch your breath by letting your awareness settle in the abdominal area. Feel the abdominal movements as your abdomen rises as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out.

After a few rounds of this practice, slowly let your awareness settle at the tip of your nose. Feel the cool inspired air flowing into your nostrils as you breathe in and become aware of the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils when you breathe out. Consciously regulate your breath so that the duration of the incoming and outgoing breathes are equal. The inspiration and expiration can be for a count of 4 or 6 initially and then with practice elongated to a count of 8 or 10. Perform at least nine rounds of this conscious deep breathing and enjoy the relaxed sensation that spreads throughout your body.

The relaxation in Shava asana can be further deepened by utilizing the Savitri Pranayama to relax and rejuvenate your body, emotions and mind.

Breathe in through your nose for a count of 6. Hold in the breath for a count of 3. Breathe out through your nose for a count of 6. Finally hold the breath out for a count of 3. Make sure that you are breathing in and out through both nostrils and that you are using the complete Yogic breathing. Perform at least 9 rounds of this combination practice that heightens the relaxation to a very deep level.

After performing 10 to 15 minutes of the Shava asana slowly start to move your fingers and toes. Perform conscious stretching and make a smooth transition from the relaxed to the active state. Lift your left arm over your head and turn over onto your left side. Continue the turning action until you come into the face-prone posture. Perform Makara Asana by placing your right hand on the left while the left is placed palm down on the ground in front of you. Keep your forehead or chin on your right hand while keeping your legs a foot apart.

Bring your hands forward near your shoulders and push yourself back into the Bhujanga Asana. Continue the back bending movement and go into the four footed Chatus Pada Asana. Relax into the Shashanga Asana with your arms stretched out in front and then finally come back to the Vajrasana. With your palms on your thighs sit quietly for some time and enjoy the effects of the deep relaxation that has spread to every part of your body.

MAKARA ASANA

Lie down in the Unmukha Asana (the face prone pose) with the hands by the side of the body. Keep the chin on the floor with the body from toes to head in a straight line. Now

spread the legs apart; heels facing each other, toes facing outwards. Bring the left hand in front of the face with the palm touching the floor and keep the right hand over it. Place the chin on the back of the right hand. Rest and relax in this posture.



BENEFITS: Relaxes the body-emotions-mind complex in a complete manner. Reduces the blood pressure and heart rate. Useful for patients of hypertension, insomnia, tension headaches and other psychosomatic disorders. Useful in reducing stress

and stress related disorders. Removes fatigue and reenergizes the entire psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine system.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Those with severe incapacitating back problems may not be able to perform the Shava Asana and Makara Asana for a long time and should gradually increase the duration with frequent change in posture as per their medical condition. Shava asana must be included at the end of every yoga session to obtain maximum benefit from the practices done in the session. Curtailment of the relaxation period can lead to over excitation and inherent problems and must not be taken too lightly.

SHPANDA – NISHPANDA KRIYA

This practice is done from Shava asana using the yogic concept of Shpanda Nishpanda, which means the coupling of tension and relaxation. We consciously tense different parts of our body as much as possible and then relax them to the maximum in a step-by-step manner. This produces a better relaxation response than the mere attempt to relax without putting in the initial effort of tension.

Lie down in a comfortable supine Shava asana with your entire body in a single straight line. After a few seconds of relaxation in this position, start to tense your entire body part-by-part from your toes up to the top of your head until every part of your body is as tense as possible. Hold this 100% tension state of Spandha for a few seconds. Let all the muscles of your entire body be as tense as possible.

At the peak of the tension, just 'let go' and immediately relax your entire body 100%. This is the state of Nishpanda. Enjoy this relaxed state and with conscious awareness continue to watch your breath as it comes in and goes out of your nose.

Repeat this practice again by tensing up your entire musculoskeletal system to the state of Spandha and hold it for a few seconds. When ready let go completely and enjoy the Nishpanda state for a few minutes.

To complete the practice repeat the Spandha – Nishpanda Kriya a third time by tensing up your entire musculoskeletal system from your toes to the top of your head. Hold the complete tension for a few seconds. When ready let go completely and enjoy the complete relaxation that ensues. Be aware of how all your muscles relax in this practice because the relaxation is deepened when it is contrasted with tension.

This practice is a boon for those suffering psychosomatic, stress induced and stress aggravated disorders such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, insomnia, peptic ulcers and bowel disorders. It is also useful for patients of musculoskeletal problems such as neck pain, back pain and arthritis.

SHAVA ASANA WITH SAVITRI PRANAYAMA

Shava asana is a relaxing and energizing posture in which the body, emotions and mind are united in the process of conscious relaxation. 15 minutes of Shava asana properly performed is equal to more than one hour of refreshing sleep. Lie supine on a flat surface with the head preferably to the north or east enabling us to be in alignment with the earth's magnetic field.

Make sure that the head and body are in line and the hands are kept relaxed by the sides of the thighs with the palms facing upwards. Relax the feet with the heels touching lightly. Let the fore foot fall away into a 'v' shape.

Start watching your breath and let your awareness settle in the abdomen. Feel the abdominal movements as the abdomen rises with the in breath and falls with the out breath. Feel the cool inspired air flowing into the nostrils and the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils. Let your awareness settle at the tip of the nose.

Now perform SAVITRI PRANAYAMA the harmonizing breath to relax and rejuvenate the body, emotions and mind. Breathe in through the nose for 6 counts and hold in for 3 counts. Breathe out through the nose for 6 counts and then hold out for 3 counts

Make sure that you are breathing in and out through both nostrils and are using the complete Yogic breathing. Repeat for 9 rounds

When coming out of the relaxation, make sure that you perform conscious stretching and make a smooth transition from the relaxed state to the active state. Do not jump up immediately after relaxation. Turn over onto the left side and then onto the face-prone pose (Unmukhasana). Perform Makarasana, Bhujangasana and then Chatus Pada Asana before coming to the sitting posture. Sit quietly for some time with the eyes closed in the sitting pose. Come up slowly to the standing pose.

MARMANASTHANAM KRIYA

The twenty-two sensitive parts of the body are known by the collective Sanskrit term Marmanasthanam. To concentrate upon these parts in a particular order or to command these areas to relax in a particular way while concentrating, gives a very satisfactory, deep relaxation that has been found by tested experiments to give relief even to compulsive dreaming. This is an excellent Kriya to do at the end of a strenuous session of Asanas and Pranayamas. The relaxation should be preceded by at least nine rounds of Savitri Pranayama, the Rhythmic Breath, to create the proper atmosphere.

This technique (Kriya) can be done in two ways, one for relaxation the other for deep concentration. For relaxation the technique is done from "feet to the head." For deep concentration from "head to feet." While concentrating upon twenty-two body parts, each part is commanded (by mind) "to relax" or a thought of peace or serenity" directed to the named area.

For relaxation, concentrate upon the (1) toes and command the toes to relax (2) feet (3) lower legs to knees (4) upper legs to hips (5) buttocks (6) base of spine (7) pelvic area (8) abdomen (9) chest and (10) shoulders. Now take your concentration down to the (11) fingers, and command the fingers to relax then (12) hands (13) lower arms to elbows (14) upper arms to shoulders where your concentration joins with body concentration (15) throat (neck) (16) around the mouth and chin (17) around the nose and cheeks (18) eyes (19) back around the ears (20) back of the head (21) top of the head (22) Cavernous Plexus in the middle of the forehead. All the while you should command "relaxation."

Perform Jyoti Dharana and Jyoti Dhyana (concentration and meditation on the Divine light) at the Bhramadhya Bindu (Mid Point Between The Eyebrows). Visualize the Divine Jyoti to be having the brilliance equal to 1000 suns but without the glare. Absorb yourself into this Divine Jyoti.

TALA KRIYA: WHOLE BODY STRETCH RELAXATION

This 4-part stretching action is performed while lying supine on the back. “Tala” refers to the Palmyra tree and you should try to stretch yourself as tall as that tree while performing this practice.



To perform the first part, lie down supine in the Shava Asana. Breathe in and start to hollow out your back as much as possible by lifting your lower spine. As you breathe out slowly recline your spine back to the ground. Repeat this practice a few times and exaggerate the movement of your

abdomen so that the highest possible lower back lift is accomplished. Do not lift your buttocks or shoulders off the ground but simply arch your back while lying supine and doing deep breathing. Repeat the practice at least 3 times before relaxing in the Shava asana.

Perform the second part by wiggling your hips and legs downwards to stretch your lower back. Imagine that your “buttocks are feet” and that they are “walking away from you”. This stretches the lower back at the expense of the stationary upper back and shoulders. After a few movements of the downward action stop and fix your hips as the stationary part. Begin to crawl “upwards” using your shoulders, until your middle and upper back are stretched to the point that your hips feel that they are being pulled out of the first position. Relax the shoulders and neck and then repeat the practice two more times. At the peak of the third round stop the upward action at the point where the neck is in a cramped position and continue to the head-rolling action of the third part.

To perform the third part, start to slowly roll your head from side to side. Roll your head to your right and then to your left. You should feel your neck being gently pulled upwards releasing you out of the cramped position created by Part II. Keep on rolling the head until the neck is fully stretched upwards. Hold this position and then start to perform the next part.



Perform the fourth part by lifting your arms over your head until the back of your hands are in touch with the ground above you. Breathe in deeply and push downwards with your toes and at

the same time stretch upwards with your fingers. Hold in the breath and keep your whole body stretched from the tip of your toes to the tips of your finger in this state of complete tension. Hold this state of Spandha for 10-15 seconds and then let go of the tension and relax you body as you breathe out in a long drawn out whoosh through your nostrils. Let your arms relax over your head in a bent position until you are ready to perform another round of this practice. Breathe in and tense the whole body from the tips of your toes to the tips of your fingers. Hold the tension for 10-15 seconds and then relax as you breathe out.

Breathe in and again tense your whole body from toes to fingertips. Hold the tension for 10-15 seconds and then relax as you breathe out. Relax your arms to your side and perform a few rounds of deep breathing in the Shava Asana.

Patients of musculoskeletal disorders such as cervical and lumbar spondylitis, lumbago and sciatica can benefit immensely from the regular application of the Tala Kriya. It is also useful for those suffering from arthritis of the upper and lower limbs.

KAYA KRIYA: DYNAMIC BODY RELAXATION

Lie supine on the ground with your head preferably to the north enabling your body to be in alignment with the earth's electromagnetic field. Make sure that your head and body are in a straight line while your hands are kept relaxed by your side with the palms facing upwards.

To perform the first part of this four part practice, adjust your feet so that they are a foot and a half apart. Perform a few rounds of regular breathing with equal duration for the incoming and outgoing breaths.



As you breathe in turn your toes inward at the ankle until they are touching the ground between your feet. On the outgoing breath, turn your feet out at the ankles until your little toes are touching



the ground on the outside. Continue three to nine rounds of slow abdominal breathing and continue this foot turning action. Turn your feet inward while breathing in and turn them out while breathing out.

After 3 to 9 rounds of this practice let go and relax for a few rounds of deep breathing. Let go of all physical tension and lie still without squirming, fidgeting or feeling the desire to move for a few minutes.



To perform the second part of the Kaya Kriya keep your feet close to each other while your arms are relaxed at your side. Take in a slow, deep intercostal breath and roll your arms along the ground as far out as they can go. Do not lift the arms off the ground, but roll them along the ground like a log being rolled across the

ground. On the outgoing breath, slowly roll your arms back inwards until your palms come in touch with the outside of your thighs.



Continue this movement with breathing for three to nine rounds by rolling your arms outwards on the in breath, and then rolling them back to the thighs on the out breath. Make a mental note of the fact that the arms movement is the complete opposite of the earlier leg movement.

After 3 to 9 rounds of this practice let go and relax for a few rounds of deep breathing. Let go of all physical tension and lie still for a few minutes.



To perform the third part of the Kaya Kriya keep your feet close to each other while your arms are relaxed at your side. While breathing deeply into your upper chest, slowly start to turn your head to the right side.

As you breathe out, roll your head back to the centre and continue rolling over to your left side. Resist the temptation to roll the head too quickly. Continue this slow head rolling for three to nine rounds.



Finally after a particular outgoing breath, let your head relax in the mid-position and totally let go of all body tension. This tensionless state is called Nishpanda. Let go of all physical tension and lie still for a few minutes.

Part 4 of the Kaya Kriya includes the combination of the first three parts in tune with the complete breathing in all areas of the lungs in the Mahat Yoga Pranayama. Start rolling your feet inwards on the abdominal inspiration, roll out your arms on the mid chest inspiration, and finally roll your head to the right side with the clavicular inspiration. Release the abdominal breath and roll out the feet until your little toes touch the ground. Continue the expiration from the middle chest and roll your arms inwards until they touch your thighs and while releasing the breath from the clavicular area roll your head from the right side to the left.

Perform nine rounds of this three-part body action in tune with the breath.

Coordination between body movement and the breath cycle brings about a reunion between the body, emotions and mind. As most eating disorders are psychosomatic in nature this reunion of the body-emotion-mind complex helps the patient to recover from their troubled condition and attain to as perfect a state of health as may be possible in the given circumstances. After performing the nine rounds of the Kaya Kriya collapse in the Nishpanda, the deep relaxation state. Let go of all physical tension and lie still for a few minutes.

CONTEMPLATIVE AND MEDITATIVE PRACTICES

VAJRA VEERA ASANA WITH HASTHA MUDRAS

The sitting Vajra Veera Asana or the heroic thunderbolt position is an excellent example of a position where the hands can be used to generate Pranic energies and awareness at the different Chakric levels.

From Vajra Asana come up onto your knees and turn your toes under. Slowly and carefully sit back down onto your heels so that the weight of your body presses down on the sensitive nerve endings situated at the base of your toes. These areas are very important for general health and this is a sort of self-acupressure that benefits the whole upper part of your body.

Slowly stretch your arms upwards and join your palms together in the Anjali Mudra. The whole back is given an excellent stretch in this pose. The entire Pranayama Kosha as well as the Sahasrara Chakra and all the higher Chakras that exist above it are energized by this Mudra. Hold the Mudra for a few seconds and contemplate the higher consciousness that is centered in this region.



Slowly bring your hands down to your head with your wrists touching the top of your head thus forming a beautiful triangular frame for your face. This is the Kailash Mudra that energizes the Sahasrara Chakra. Focus your mind on this area which is related to the prefrontal region of the brain and is important for the development of an integrated personality.

When the hands are brought down from the Kailash Mudra and placed in front of the forehead we can energize our Ajna Chakra or centre of inner intuition. This energizes our Pituitary Gland which is the master conductor of our endocrine orchestra and helps us to obtain excellent glandular health.

As we bring the Namaskar Mudra to the front of the neck we can feel the energetic vibrations that recharge the Vishuddha Chakra and normalize our thyroid function. Concentrate on this vital region as the stress related Thyroid disorders may be prevented and managed by this simple practice that works at the level of our energy body.

When the Namaskar Mudra is brought down to the chest region we can feel the healing energies flood through our Anahata or heart Chakra. Let the qualities of compassion and empathy flow through this centre to help us become a better and more humane being with a universal outlook.

Come back onto your knees and relax the toes. Sit down in the Vajrasana for a few seconds. Slowly release the Asana and relax your feet by stretching them out in front for a bit of shaking to relieve any pent up tension from the lower limb.

This sequence of Hastha Mudras in the Vajra Veera Asana helps us to recharge our psychic battery, that is our Pranamaya Kosha and thus produces health and well being at all levels of our existence.

ANTHARA DHARANA

Anthara Dharana refers to the various techniques of inner concentration that can be done from Dharmika Asana, the devotional posture. Assume the heel sitting Vajrasana and breathe in deeply filling all sections of your lungs. Blast out your breath in multiple whooshes while slowly bringing your head down to the ground. Repeat the practice two more times. After performing three rounds of Mukha Bhastrika, relax in the Dharmika Asana by pulling your nose in-between the knees. Catch hold of your heels and let your elbows relax to the ground. Concentrate on the point of your forehead that is touching the ground and visualize yourself in a positive, happy and healthy state of body, emotions and mind. From Dharmika Asana you can perform the following techniques of inner concentration.

KSHITIJAN KRIYA

Kshiti means "horizon" in Sanskrit, but the horizon used for this inner concentration is an inner-mind horizon. After performing the Dharmika Asana, mentally think of the point where your head is touching the floor. Directly inside the head between the hemispheric folds of the brain is a nerve centre called Bindu Nadi. Withdraw your concentration into this Bindu and imagine that you are looking into the Eastern sky, just before dawn. Your inner screen or mental horizon is one of velvety, warm darkness. Then, imagine a full sun rise with all its colours. Relax in this pleasant inner view, letting the experience flood through your entire nervous system.

EKA VARNA KRIYA

Experiment with another Yogic technique while in Dharmika Asana. This will educe "inner light" experiences. Concentrate at the same Bindu point, thinking only about your single most favourite colour. Choose the colour that you like best from the entire colour spectrum. Imagine that you are completely engulfed in this liquid colour as though you have fallen into an ocean of coloured liquid. Sometimes a swirling sensation of colour will develop and you will be literally "sucked into" a point of light in which you may also experience some inner sounds. Do not let these sounds interrupt your concentration, but become completely lost in the colour and sound.

JYOTIR DARSHANA

Jyotir Darshana is the blessing of a view of the inner light. Begin by concentrating in Bindu Nadi, at that point where the head touches the floor in Dharmika Asana.

Imagine you are sitting out of doors in bright sunlight or watching a bright sunrise. Concentrate fully on this idea. If you do so, a "pinprick" of light will appear from within the mind's eye, the Third Eye, the Ajna Chakra. Hold this light gently in your inner gaze. Do not concentrate too hard or it will go away. Learn to gaze passively, without desire to grasp, possess, or hold what your mind educes. Keep the concentration until the light fades or you feel sufficiently relaxed to discontinue the practice.

CHAKRA DHYANA

Our subtle body is made up of 12 major energy vortices known as the Dwa Dasha Chakras. There are six higher Anda Chakras and six lower Pinda Chakras. The Six Pinda Chakras namely Mooladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna offer us an excellent opportunity for contemplation and meditation.

The first of the concentration practices is the Shat Chakra Pranayama that can be done from any meditative sitting posture such as Vajra Asana.

While breathing in, visualize Pranic energy rising from the base of your spine up through the six Chakras situated along the cerebro-spinal axis. While you breathe out visualize the

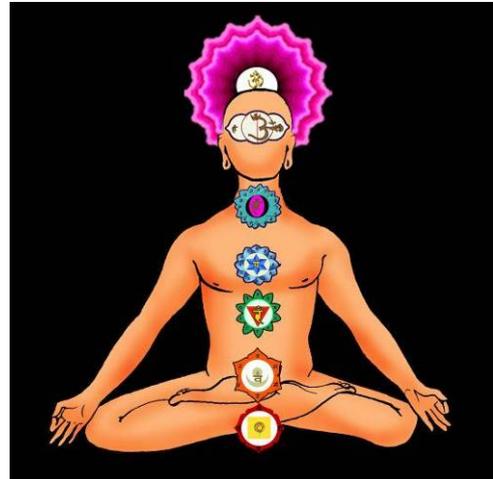


Prana coming down through the same six Chakras. Imagine that your body is a six-storied building and the Prana is rising and descending on an elevator. A held-in and a held-out breath can be added appropriately at the “back of the brow” centre, the Ajna Chakra and at the base of the spine, the Mooladhara Chakra.

This meditative sitting is best done facing North or East. The performance of a few rounds of deep and conscious breathing in Shava Asana prior to this meditative sitting can serve to enhance its effect drastically.

Kneel in the Vajra Asana, or take up any sitting posture in which you are absolutely certain that the spine is yogically erect so that the energy can move upwards in an effortless and smooth manner.

Do some deep Chakra Pranayama. As you come up through the Chakras, starting from the base of the spine and through to beyond the top of the head, try to become aware of each of these centers. With practice and inner growth these centres will start to become conscious centres filling with light, sound and colour.



When the breath is completely filled in and you are in the Sahasrara Chakra beyond the top of the head, hold your breath in a Prana Kumbhaka, a held in breath, for a lengthy period of time.

Slowly let the breath out and keep your concentration in that Thousand Petalled Lotus Chakra.

Let the breath take on any form that it wishes and simply, hold the idea that you are sitting in the midst of a beautiful Thousand-Petalled Pink Lotus.

Hold that idea as long as you can, repeating the visualization over and over until a pleasing sensation of “being suspended” comes about.

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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR YOGA EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (ICYER)
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This world famous Yoga Institute of Pondicherry has been offering intensive **Six Month International Yoga Teachers Training Courses** from October 2nd through March 25th since 1968, without any break. Thousands of students from all over India and the world have been thoroughly trained in an intensive Yoga programme which starts at 4.30 am each morning and concludes only by 9.00 pm each evening. **CLASSICAL RISHICULTURE ASHTANGA YOGA (GITANANDA YOGA)** as expounded by the world famous Guru, **Yoga Maharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj** is taught in carefully graded steps.

Swami Gitananda, a Medical Doctor born in India but who spent forty years in the West, taught Classical Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga with a scientific, medical basis. The revered Swamiji, considered one of the five leading world experts in Classical Ashtanga Yoga, attained Samadhi in December 29, 1993. Yogic cleansing practices and fasting, diet and nutrition are also basic to the course. More than 400 Asanas, Pranayamas, cleansing practices, Mudras and Kriyas are taught in the six months. Thorough study of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Upanishads, Yoga Vashista, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, Bhagavad Gita and other important Yogic texts is made. Training is also given in Carnatic Music, with emphasis on devotional Bhajans. Those interested may also study Bharatanatyam and Classical Instrumental Music. Training in Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga techniques are given, including elaborate work with Yogic relaxation, concentration and visualization practices. Seats in the course are limited to ten persons annually, who are accepted only after going through preliminary instruction with the Institute's trained teachers and participation in the 52 Lesson Correspondence Course, **Yoga: Step-by-Step**, which is the basic syllabus of the Six Month Course.

The Institute has a traditional Gurukula setting, in an ideal garden atmosphere, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Students are also introduced to the Indian way of life, festivals, cultural programmes, community activities and Hindu rites and rituals, to cultivate an awareness of the culture from which Yoga has sprung. From October 2001, this course has been extended to an additional six months training, for those considered suitable, giving "hands-on" training in Yoga teaching and class organisation as well as undertaking senior Yoga practices. Those eligible for this advanced Yoga work will at the end of the one-year training receive a One-Year International Diploma in Yoga Education. ICYER has more than a 130 affiliated Yoga centers in 23 countries.

More than 40 books on Yoga have been published, as well as a monthly magazine, **Yoga Life**, which has completed more than 40 years of publication for a worldwide audience. The **International Centre for Yoga Education and Research (ICYER)** is also Headquarters for several worldwide organizations, including **Vishwa Yoga Samaj**, **Yoga Jivana Satsangha (International)** and the **Society for the Preservation of Rishiculture Yoga (SPARC)**.

The **International Centre for Yoga Education and Research** is also the office headquarters for **Sri Kambaliswamy Madam**, a 131-year-old Samadhi site of the great Ashtanga Yoga Guru Sri Sri Kambaliswamigal at Thattanchavady, Pondicherry. The Samadhi of its founder, Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, is also located at

Kambaliswamy Madam and has become a world famous pilgrimage place. Dr. Swami Gitananda left his body in Samadhi at 2.20 am December 29, 1993, Arudhra Darshan Day and the full moon in the Tamil month of Margazhi. Daily Pujas are conducted at Sri Kambaliswamy Madam, with elaborate Pujas from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. on Sunday. Sunday Pujas are open to public who wish to experience a traditional Hindu Puja. Grand Pujas for the Samadhis of the eight Gurus of the lineage are conducted throughout the year, as well as many Carnatic Music Festivals at the **Sri Kambaliswamy Madam**.

The **City Centre** of ICYER is called **Yoganjali Natyalayam** and Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri established it on March 29, 1993. The flourishing Centre of Yoga, Bharata Natyam and Carnatic Music with more than 500 actively enrolled students and more than 8000 alumni is located in Central Pondicherry, behind the New Bus station. It caters to the needs of the local populace as well as providing special individual and personally tailored lessons for passing Tourists and those visiting Pondicherry on a short-term basis. **Yoganjali Natyalayam** has developed a very popular Bharata Natyam troupe, which specializes in performance of the difficult acrobatic **Natya Karanas**, which are essentially a form of Yoga Asanas. The Centre presents a full three-hour length Bharata Natyam Dance Drama each year in July - August to celebrate the birthday of Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri. Its Annual Day is held in June each year and is a feast of spectacular music, dance and Yoga demonstrations with more than 400 children appearing on stage.

Yogamani Kalaimamani Yogacharini MEENAKSHI DEVI BHAVANANI is Director and Resident Acharya of **ICYER at Ananda Ashram**. She is the Dharmapatni and senior most disciple of the internationally acclaimed Yoga master, **Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj** and has devoted her life to his teachings and to institutions founded by him. A trained journalist by profession, her articles, essays and features appear regularly in National and International press. She is Editor / Managing Director of **SATYA PRESS**, a publishing house based in Pondicherry. Her defining book on **THE HISTORY OF YOGA** is a path breaking effort that will be released in 2011. With the blessings of her Bharatanatyam master Padmashri Adyar K. Lakshman of Kalakshetra she has trained many thousands of students in Yoga and Bharatanatyam in the past 40 years. She was Director of **Sri Kambaliswamy Yoga and Cultural Arts Youth Programme** since 1975 which trained more than 20,000 rural youth in the Carnatic Arts and Yoga free of cost. She is considered a pioneer in bringing the Performing Fine Arts and Yoga to the common people in Pondicherry. She is **Editor** of the International Yoga journal **YOGA LIFE** since 1970. She has organised **five major International Yoga Conferences in Pondicherry and is adviser to Department of Tourism, Government of Pondicherry for its Annual International Yoga Festival now completing its 18th year**. She is a prolific author with **10 books**, including two books of poetry to her credit. She is **Director of Yoganjali Natyalayam**, a popular City Centre for the propagation of Classical Yoga, Bharatanatyam and Carnatic Music in Pondicherry and has developed a famous Bharatanatyam troupe that appears regularly in prestigious festivals and also stages spectacular Bharatanatyam and Yoga programmes yearly all over India. The troupe is well known for its inclusion of the acrobatic Natya Karanas (poses) into its repertoire. She has also choreographed **17 Major Dance Dramas of three-hour length on various spiritual themes** in the past 18 years.

She has been recipient of many National and State Awards. She was awarded the title "**Yogamani**" in 1986 by the President of India Shri Zail Singh Ji at Asian Village, New Delhi. In 1997 she was awarded the National Award, **Bhaskar Award** by Bharat Nirman and Indian Trade Promotion Organisation, New Delhi, one of fifty eminent Indians so honoured during the 50th year of Indian Independence for their contribution to Indian culture and spirituality. In January 1999 she was given the highest award by the Pondicherry

Government for an artist, the **Puduvai Kalaimamani Award** for her work in Bharata Natyam. She was the second artist so honoured. In December 1999 she was named as an eminent Yoga expert to the **Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy**, under the Health Ministry, Government of India, New Delhi and she was named to the Finance Committee of this Council in March 2000. She was named to the **Academic Council, Pondicherry University**, in March 2000. She has served on several inspection teams and several committees in her capacity as a member of this Academic Council. She was awarded a **Gold Medal** by Government of Pondicherry for her work in Bharata Natyam on February 26, 2001. She is also Scientific Advisor to the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, New Delhi.

Smt Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani was honoured with the award of **OUTSTANDING SENIOR CITIZEN** by the Pondicherry Junior Chamber (Jaycees) on the 15th August 2003. The honorable Chief Secretary, Govt of Pondicherry presented the award at a glittering function on the 15th August 2003. She was awarded the **Outstanding Achiever's Award 2003** by the **Vinayagar Chaturthi Committee** in recognition for her services in promoting Yoga and Indian Cultural Arts in Pondicherry. She was awarded the **Bangalore Sundaram Gold Medal for her "Noble Contribution, Distinguished Service and Outstanding Merits in Yoga"** by Asana Andiappan College of Yoga and Research Centre, Chennai, at Anna University, Chennai, December 7th, 2003. She is recognized as a leading intellectual expert in the deeper aspects of Yoga and in recognition of this aspect of her work, she was elected as **Fellow of Indian Academy of Yoga**, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi in 2003. She has been awarded the **PUDUVAI SHAKTI AWARD** from the WOMEN TASK FORCE Y2K in 2006 in recognition of her yeomen service for the cause of Yoga and Indian cultural fine arts in Pondicherry. She was awarded the title **PALKALAI POOMPOZHIL** by Pulavar I. Pattabhiraman, the Director of Valluvar Villisai Group in 2006. She has also received the **PATANJALI AWARD** from the Lion's Club and is member of Expert panel of the Task Force for Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) for Dept of AYUSH, Ministry of Health, Govt of India, New Delhi. She is Advisor, Gitananda Yoga Associations of Italy, Spain, USA, Germany, UK, Czech Republic, South Africa and Australia.

Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani is considered one of the major International and National leaders of the modern Yoga movement. She is regularly called to New Delhi and elsewhere to offer her advice in Seminars, Conference and Official Government meetings. Though born in the USA in 1943, she came to India in 1967 and has lived here ever since. She was awarded Indian Citizenship on November 30th, 1992, in her own words "the proudest day of my life."

Yogacharya Dr. ANANDA BALAYOGI BHAVANANI is Chairman of the International Centre for Yoga Education and Research at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry, India (www.icyer.com). He is also chairman of Yoganjali Natyalayam, the premier institute of Yoga and Carnatic Music and Bharatanatyam in Pondicherry (www.rishiculture.org). He is son and successor of the internationally acclaimed Yoga team of Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and Yogacharini Kalaimamani Ammaji, Smt Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani. He is a Gold Medalist in Medical Studies (MBBS) with postgraduate diplomas in Family Health (PGDFH) and Yoga (PGDY) as well as Advanced Diploma in Yoga under his illustrious parents in 1991-93. A Fellow of the Indian Academy of Yoga, he has authored 18 DVDs and 15 books on Yoga as well as published five dozen papers, compilations and abstracts on Yoga and Yoga research in National and International Journals. He is a Classical Indian Vocalist, Percussionist, Music Composer and Choreographer of Indian Classical Dance in addition to his duties as Programme Co-ordinator of the Advanced Centre for Yoga Therapy Education and Research (ACYTER), JIPMER, Pondicherry. In recent years he has

traveled abroad eight times and conducted invited talks, public events, workshops, retreats and been major presenter at Yoga conferences in the UK, USA, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand. He is an Honorary International Advisor to the IAYT (International Association of Yoga Therapists), USA and various Gitananda Yoga Associations all over the world.